



THE ayurveda way

108 PRACTICES FROM THE
World's Oldest Healing System for
Better Sleep, Less Stress, Optimal Digestion, and More

ANANTA RIPA AJMERA



Our little ebook farmstand.



Learn something
creative every month.

www.storey.com/freshpicks

Storey



THE
ayurveda
way

108 PRACTICES *from the*
World's Oldest Healing System for
Better Sleep, Less Stress, Optimal Digestion, and More

BY ANANTA RIPA AJMERA



Storey Publishing





I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

To my teacher, my Guru, Acharya Shunya

To my great teacher, her Guru, Baba Ayodhya Nath

To my great-grand teacher, her Guru's Guru, Paramatman Shanti
Prakash

And to the unbroken line of Vedic Gurus who came before them

Thank you for revealing the Ayurveda Way to me and blessing me
with learned personal ancestors, who were themselves renowned
Ayurveda healers and teachers in the sacred land of India:

Amarchand Khokhani, my grandfather

Hakemchand Khokhani, my great-grandfather

Surchand Khokhani, my great-great-grandfather

And the rest of my maternal family lineage

*May I continue to walk the Ayurveda Way, as you walked it, once
upon a time.*

Contents

Preface

Introducing an Ancient System

How Ayurveda Heals You

Lesson 1: Dig Deep

Lesson 2: You Are the Living Composite of the Whole Universe

Lesson 3: Like Increase Like

Lesson 4: Follow the Sun's Cycles for an Empowered Daily Lifestyle

Lesson 5: Follow the Ebb and Flow of the Seasons for Abiding Health All Year Round

Part 1: Healing Your Body

Chapter 1: Food as Medicine

1. Eat warm, cooked, gently oiled foods.

2. Drink water (preferably boiled water) only when you're actually thirsty.

3. Embrace certain dairy products.

4. Mindfully part with or modify other dairy products.

5. Avoid incompatible food combinations.

6. Observe your digestion to assess your overall health.

7. Cook with love.

8. Heal your digestion with takra.

9. Start your day on a stress-free note with sweet sooji cereal.

10. Reclaim your health with khichadi.

11. Sleep like a baby with spiced milk.

12. Calm your mind and body with opo squash.

13. Soothe your soul with mung dal soup.

Chapter 2: The Magical Healing World of Ayurvedic Spices

14. Use turmeric for good health on the inside and out.

15. Sprinkle cumin on any savory food to improve digestion.

16. Help lose weight with Himalayan pink rock salt.

17. Connect with coriander and cilantro: your emotional support system.

18. Invite a fiery fivesome into your diet and life.

19. Benefit from your true blue friends.

20. Make Ayurvedic veggie pilaf with many healing spices.

21. Try Ayurvedic fries for a healthy take on comfort food.
22. Enjoy a savory sooji dish.
23. Cook easily digestible mung dal pancakes for breakfast.
24. Complement any savory meal with cilantro chutney.
25. Spice up your cooking with Ayurvedic fajitas.
26. Warm your heart with butternut squash.
27. Make a mouthwatering masoor dal.
28. Give your pasta an Ayurvedic twist.

Chapter 3: Beauty, Naturally

29. Say goodbye to foods stripping you of beauty.
30. Start eating your way to greater beauty.
31. Avoid overheating.
32. Make your own soap and body scrub.
33. Wash your hair less often and more wisely.
34. Oil your hair.
35. Make an all-natural anti-acne and anti-aging facemask.
36. Embrace the healing power of marigold flowers.

PART 2: Strengthening Your Mind

Chapter 4: The Art of Mindful Eating

37. Consciously chew your food.

38. Start your meals with a moment of gratitude.

39. Sit in Thunderbolt Pose after meals.

40. Eat in silence when possible.

41. Consume the right amount of food and liquids.

42. Eat more fresh sattvic foods and less rajasic and tamasic foods.

43. Snack wisely.

44. Walk 100 steps after meals.

45. Make lunch your largest meal.

46. Let your mind calm down from strong emotions before eating.

47. Eat in a pleasant environment.

Chapter 5: Change Your Mind, Change Your Life

48. Keep good company.

49. Take a shower daily.

50. Grow a mandukaparni plant.

51. Light a lamp.

52. Do something of service, without strings attached.

53. Value process over outcome by practicing Karma Yoga.

54. Calm your mind with buzzing bee breathing exercise.

55. Clean up your inner and outer space.

56. Speak your truth.

57. Free yourself from the shackles of shame.

58. Connect with the power of intention to cultivate a spiritual practice.

59. Let go in Dhruvasana.

60. Find inner stability in Tree Pose.

61. Cultivate and care for the garden of your mind.

Part 3: Freeing Your Spirit

Chapter 6: How to Actually Love Yourself

62. Give yourself an oil massage.

63. Spend time alone.

64. Give yourself the gift of silence.

65. Seek your own approval.

66. Give from a place of inner fullness.

67. Be like a lotus.

68. Slow down.

69. Reclaim your inner power in Cobra Pose.

70. Practice evoking the sun as a friend of all through Respectful Greeting Pose.

71. Go outside.

72. Practice natural yoga poses to connect your body, mind, and spirit.

73. Connect with the unconditionally loving spirit of a dog in Downward-Facing Dog.

74. Nourish your heart with the sound of OM.

75. Create a personal sanctuary space in your home.

Chapter 7: Inspired Ancient Practices to Transform Your Mornings

76. Wake up early.

77. Start the day by gazing at your hands.

78. Honor the sun.

79. Study spiritual books and inspiring teachings.

80. Write in a journal.

81. Let go of negative thoughts and emotions with a special water practice.

82. Chant inspiring mantras in the morning.

83. Evoke the powerful spirit of a lion.

84. Practice an empowering sun meditation.

Part 4: Putting It All Together

Chapter 8: The Ayurvedic Daily Routine Prescription

85. Opt for more natural toothpaste options for healthier teeth.

86. Do oil pulling to strengthen your voice and boost your oral health.

87. Drink warm or room-temperature water soon after waking up to aid healthy digestion.

88. Eat on time to maximally benefit from your food.

89. Exercise before breakfast or dinner for the best results.

90. Shower well.

91. Don't suppress your natural urges.

92. Have the most productive meetings and make your best decisions between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

93. Do grounding activities between 6 and 10 p.m. to promote sound sleep.

94. Have better sex at nighttime.

95. Sleep by 10 p.m. so you can rise by 6 a.m. for optimal sleep and overall health.

Chapter 9: Seasonal Strategies to Live in Harmony with Nature

96. Benefit from Ayurveda's concept of six tastes as they relate to the seasons.

97. Eat your way to good health throughout the year.

98. Make the most of your workout throughout the year.

99. Drink seasonally appropriate beverages.

100. Concentrate your weight-loss efforts in the spring for lasting results.

101. Conceive during wintertime to create the healthiest baby possible.

102. Take advantage of the natural focus the fall season provides to launch a successful new venture.

103. Plan active vacations for winter and retreats for summer.

104. Prevent seasonal colds and coughs.

105. Try dry scrubbing to support weight loss.

106. Enjoy dressing for the seasons.

107. Nap according to the seasons to promote sound sleep habits.

108. Absorb the moon's medicine.

Acknowledgments

Resources

References

Index

Access the Good Life with More Books from Storey

Author Biography

Copyright

Share Your Experience!



PREFACE

My life always looked pretty awesome to others on the outside. I was, in many ways, the girl who seemed to have everything: intelligence, wealth, a fancy college education at New York University's prestigious Stern School of Business, parties, expensive vacations, beautiful clothes, jewelry, shoes, plenty of friends, and dating possibilities. What more could a girl growing up in America want, right?

My inner and outer worlds, however, sharply contrasted one another. I suffered from much pain and stress connected with traumatic childhood experiences. My mind was like a prison, full of anxiety, fear, and worries. My sleep was regularly disturbed by nightmares. Though I was in my mid-twenties, I felt tired a lot. I worried a great deal about how I would fulfill my life's purpose, which I felt was to be of service to humanity. My father wanted me to climb the corporate ladder. I never felt that was right for me, and we fought constantly about it.

My body wasn't supporting me, either. My hair began falling out. I had acne. I struggled for years with eating disorders. I regularly skipped meals and had terrible digestion. The worst of my physical suffering occurred during my menstrual cycles, when I'd have excruciating pain and depended on over-the-counter painkillers to get me through each month. I felt powerless in the face of my own body and mind.

By the time I was 24, I'd searched everywhere for health solutions. I was sick and tired of trying random diets, taking painkillers, and doing talk therapy to try to get to the bottom of my years of suffering. Even yoga was not able to help me beyond a point, as it didn't teach me how to eat or what kind of lifestyle I needed to support my practice. I needed and wanted something

truly holistic I could understand and benefit from immediately at the levels of body, mind, and spirit.

Ayurveda, the ancient medical science of life from India, became the answer to all my ailments. Ayurveda not only fights disease but also teaches people how to become — and remain — healthy. It addresses the root causes of why we manifest health challenges at the levels of the body, mind, spirit, and five senses. Ayurveda gave me the tools I needed to take my health into my own hands.

Ayurveda teaches that health is our birthright, and that it exists at the core of each person, though hidden at times by disease and distress. It views each person as a whole, multidimensional being and addresses every aspect of him or her. Finally, I discovered a system of healing that didn't judge or label me, or try to give me a quick-fix solution to "just eat" or take antidepressants. And the solutions to my problems could be attained right from the comfort of my own kitchen and garden! Imagine that.

Since following Ayurveda's vast health-promoting practices, I can't even remember the last time I needed to visit a doctor. I craft my own radiant health with each food, spice, thought, yoga pose, and breathing exercise I employ for wellness. I feel connected to a source of joy, freedom, and peace that emanates from within my own being and isn't dependent upon anything outside myself. I feel completely transformed, like I've been born again, into what the Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore would call "the freedom of the life of the soul."

I have a much more ease-filled relationship with my parents, who have become some of the greatest supporters of my unconventional path. I hardly notice when I have my menstrual cycles now. My skin is clear. People often think I'm younger than I am. I sleep soundly. My digestion is strong, I never skip meals, and I find joy from a sacred relationship I've developed with food.

I have much more energy than I ever had, giving me the strength to handle significant amounts of responsibility and manifest many entrepreneurial service projects. I am living the life of spirituality and service I always dreamed of. And it has only just begun.

How did this all happen within a span of just five short years? With the love, grace, and blessings of my Ayurveda teacher, Acharya Shunya, who is also my spiritual teacher, or Guru. Acharya Shunya was born into a long line of Vedic spiritual teachers extending back to ancient India. She learned Ayurveda, yoga, and Vedanta (a universal Vedic spiritual philosophy) from her grandfather Baba Ayodhya Nath in Ayodhya, India. Baba Ayodhya Nath, in turn, learned from his teacher Paramatman Shanti Prakash, a renowned 19th-century teacher who was also his father, and from master yogis in the Himalayas. The yoga practices in this book come directly from a lifechanging pilgrimage that Baba, my great teacher, embarked on in the Himalayas. I studied at Vedika Global, the school Acharya Shunya founded to carry on her family tradition of teaching the living wisdom of Ayurveda, yoga, and Vedanta. While I am now a teacher of Ayurveda lifestyle, informed by the spiritual sciences of yoga and Vedanta, I remain, first and foremost, a deep and sincere student of my Guru.

After years of schooling at leading institutions, where I lived from exam to exam, I've had the blessing of learning at Vedika Global primarily from practice, from applying the knowledge in the laboratory of my own life. Whereas my educational goals were previously mostly to obtain a certificate, the education I've received at Vedika has uplifted my spirit and transformed my consciousness. The study of all the Vedic sciences is lifelong, as they are all geared toward the lofty goal of awakening to the truth of our highest Self.

In ancient India, students learned Ayurveda (and other complex subjects) by living with or near the teacher and being part of the teacher's family for many years. Students would help out with household chores since they were then members of the teacher's family. This tradition of residential education in a family-style school (called *gurukula*, meaning "teacher's family") was mostly wiped out during the British colonial rule of India (as was the practice of Ayurveda). Acharya Shunya has been a pioneer in reviving the *gurukula* system of education.

I've been extremely fortunate to live near Acharya Shunya and her life partner, Sanjai, a master Ayurveda chef who teaches Ayurvedic cooking at Vedika Global. Over the years, I have been blessed to take care of their animals and plants and help out with some chores, as students would do in the ancient *gurukula* tradition. You'll read about some of the beautiful experiences I've had and lessons I have learned from these human, animal, and plant teachers. Spending a significant amount of time in my teachers' home has also meant chopping lots of vegetables and having the rare opportunity to apprentice with a master chef. I learned all of the delicious recipes in this book from Chef Sanjai.

All of the practices and recommendations presented in this book are based upon the ancient wisdom I've been fortunate to learn at Vedika Global. They come directly from ancient Ayurvedic treatises, namely *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Bhavaprakash*, and *Ashtanga Hridayam*. These books contain the healing wisdom that the Vedic sages are believed to have received in the depths of their meditations in ancient India. While the scope of this particular book is purposely simplified, know that you are supported by a vast ocean of knowledge in Ayurveda.

Most people can safely follow the practices and suggestions in this book for disease prevention, health promotion, and wellbeing

optimization. Take your time reading this book and applying the practices that speak most to you. Make changes one step at a time to ensure they are sustainable. Keep in mind that some health changes may occur almost immediately, while others may require patience and perseverance. I extend my hand to you to hold on to at each step as you progress along your wellness journey. You can stay in touch with me by visiting my website, wholeyoga-ayurveda.com.

I truly feel Ayurveda has given me a second chance at life. It informs and suffuses each and every aspect of my life, filling my heart with hope, light, and freedom where there was once despair, darkness, and a feeling of imprisonment. When I discovered that my own maternal grandfather, Amarchand Khokhani, was a renowned Ayurvedic doctor (*vaidya*) in India, and that he's also part of a long line of Ayurvedic healers, I knew I had connected with my purpose in this lifetime. I believe I am here on earth to spread the sciences of Ayurveda, yoga, and Vedanta, which have given my very life back to me.

As Acharya Shunya once shared, "Ayurveda belongs wherever there is suffering, because Ayurveda ignites a lamp in every heart, without being expensive, without depleting nature, and without making the body an arsenal of harsh chemicals. Ayurveda is a knowledge-based system, a friendly system, an ecologically viable system. Yes. We can say yes to it. Here is this living science. Come to it, and change your life."



ABOUT THE YOGA AND BREATHING EXERCISES IN THIS BOOK

Familiarity with the yoga poses and breathing exercises in this book is assumed. If you're unfamiliar with any of these practices, I strongly recommend finding a teacher to show these to you, and then using what's featured here as reference. No book (or video) can replace the value of in-person instruction when you are first learning yoga.

Introducing an Ancient System

Ayurveda, the science of healthy living, originated in the ancient civilizations of India more than 5,000 years ago. The word Ayurveda comes from the Sanskrit root words veda (study) and ayush (life). It literally means “the knowledge or study of life.” Ayurveda is the oldest healing system in the world. It is believed that Ayurvedic ideas played a formative role in developing Chinese medicine.



The pantheon of Ayurvedic knowledge is believed to have been revealed to the ancient sages of India (spiritual scientists called *rishis*) in the depths of their meditations. In as early as the 3rd

century BCE, the medical science of Ayurveda developed an advanced scientific methodology, which consisted of observation and inductive, deductive, and analogical reasoning. Ayurveda's theories of drug composition, molecular structure, physicochemical properties, and therapeutic actions of food and drugs and their pharmacological actions were fully developed by this time. These concepts were based on Nyaya, an ancient Vedic doctrine of physics. The foundation of advanced molecular biology and quantum physics can be seen in ancient works by Ayurvedic authors like Kashiraj Dhanvantari.

There are over 600 plants and more than 8,000 recipes of drug combinations in the Ayurvedic pharmacopoeia.

By the 1st century CE, Ayurveda emerged with a two-pronged focus on preventative health and curative medicine, which includes internal medicine, psychiatry, surgery, and toxicology. This book is concerned with Ayurveda's practices for preventative health.

The World Health Organization reports that, by 2020, two-thirds of all disease worldwide will be the result of lifestyle choices. Mahatma Gandhi loved Ayurveda because he believed that teaching us how to live in harmony with nature should be the purpose of medicine; with Ayurveda's emphasis on lifestyle changes addressing the root causes of diseases, this purpose is realized.



ANCIENT ROOTS OF MODERN SURGERY

The Ayurvedic sage Rishi Sushrut is considered the grandfather of modern surgery. His text *Sushruta Samhita* is the world's most ancient document on surgery. The *Sushruta Samhita* was compiled between 700 and 600 BCE, whereas *Corpus Hippocraticum* (the text of modern medicine) was written between the 5th and 4th centuries BCE.

How Ayurveda Heals You

This book covers Ayurveda's primary focus: health promotion, disease prevention, and wellbeing optimization.

A beautiful poetic verse from the *Sushruta Samhita* reads, "Life is the dynamic combination of the body, senses, mind, and spirit, or the conscious principle." Ayurveda is the first holistic science defining health as a four-dimensional state of wellbeing of your body, mind, senses, and spirit. If all of Ayurveda were to be summarized in a single word, it would be balance (*santulan*). Accordingly, I've divided the first three sections of this book into body, mind, and spirit. The practices I've recommended throughout help balance your five senses.

While many people know Ayurveda primarily by its three bioforces, or *doshas* (*vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*; see [here](#) for more information), there's a lot more to Ayurveda. As the science of life, Ayurveda touches upon all aspects of how to live in a healthy, happy, and fulfilling way. Its wide-spanning range includes how to improve your digestion, practical ways to love yourself (and thereby improve all your relationships), what kinds of daily and

seasonal regimens to adopt for health promotion, and all-natural skincare. Ayurveda also gives you abundant spiritual insights. I've tried to capture the range of what Ayurveda offers through the varied nature of the mind, body, and spirit practices in this book.

Living Ayurveda has made me appreciate the great depth and breadth of this expansive science. The following five lessons have been particularly life changing for me, and so I am happy to share them with you as an introduction to Ayurveda.

LESSON 1

Dig Deep

Whereas modern Western medicine tends to focus on helping you manage the symptoms of your health problems, Ayurveda teaches you to dig deep to determine the root causes of why you manifest certain diseases in the first place.

A client once described how she was sent to various eating disorder centers as a teenager due to what was really a digestive disturbance called irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Because the doctors only looked at the surface level of her weight loss, she was wrongly diagnosed with anorexia. At the eating disorder clinics, she witnessed young girls with eating disorder diagnoses hanging themselves out of deep mental despair. This trauma caused her much health-related anxiety. And it was all totally unnecessary.

Had my client been able to find her way to Ayurveda then, she would have learned that it was her diet that led to her severe weight loss, IBS, and subsequent eating-related anxiety. An Ayurveda practitioner could have given her a customized diet to bring her physical digestion to a state of balance and taught her the

art of mindful eating at the mental and psychological level. And she would have been guided to connect with a deeper part of herself that's beyond the body and mind.

I know from my own experience with anorexia as a teenager that eating disorders are about more than just the denial of food, and often reflect a deeper spiritual hunger. I'm incredibly grateful to Ayurveda for addressing the root causes of my eating disorder, which were much more psychological than they were physical. I can see how certain mental misperceptions I possessed created my physical imbalances. By transforming my mind with the healing power of Ayurveda, I restored my physical health.

Ayurveda encourages us to go beyond examining our outward symptoms and our physical body. Because each of the four dimensions of Ayurveda (body, mind, spirit, and senses) plays a critical role in manifesting both health and disease, we must also examine our mind, emotions, and any existential suffering. That's why, when practiced in its traditional way (not merely as a medicine-prescribing profession), Ayurveda leaves absolutely no corner of your existence unexamined in the patient-intake process. Ayurveda is a wonderful complement to Western medicine because it paves a path for patients to truly practice health promotion and disease prevention.

By digging deep, Ayurveda empowers you to make health-promoting choices to reclaim wellness at every level: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. I'm delighted to share many of my discoveries of healing at all of these levels so that you, too, can start taking your health into your own hands.



THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPASSION

Ayurveda is defined as a science of healthy living that teaches you how to distinguish between actions that bring you joy and those that bring you sorrow (as our mental states greatly impact our physical wellbeing). There is an increasing body of academic research proving the importance of compassion for mental health. Ayurvedic sages, however, have always known this, and have proclaimed happiness-giving actions to be those that benefit you *and* society. In other words, individual health has always been equated with serving the community in Ayurveda.

LESSON 2

You Are the Living Composite of the Whole Universe

That's right. There's no separation between nature and you. Everything you hear, smell, see, taste, and touch in the outer world can be discovered inside you, too.

A key Ayurvedic concept is that of the fundamental union between the macrocosm (the whole universe) and the microcosm (the universe within you). The wise saying “As above, so below” expresses the same wisdom that Ayurveda has revealed for thousands of years.

So, what unites us all? How are you connected with the whole world? We are all connected through the five great elements (*pancha mahabhutas*): space, air, fire, water, and earth. These elements comprise our individual bodies and minds and the whole world around us. Let’s take a look at how.

The expansive spaces. What do you think of when you look up at the sky? I always feel expansive. As I look at the clouds, which represent absolute spaciousness to me, I’m reminded to keep my mind and heart open. Within the body, it’s similarly important to have open space in the lungs, nose, arteries, and abdomen. If you’ve ever experienced congestion in your lungs or felt like you can’t breathe after eating a large meal, I think you can relate to the importance of keeping these spaces within the body open! The element of space is subtle. It’s connected with the sense of sound. I feel more spaciousness throughout my being when I close my eyes to meditate and connect with an inner openness that’s as wide as the sky.

The restless, moving air. Hurricanes and tornadoes are powerful displays of the air element in nature. Inside your body, you can experience the movement of air, too. Whenever you walk, dance, jump, run, or otherwise physically move your body, it’s the element of air within you that creates this movement. Air is present in the subtle movements of the breath. You are able to contract and relax your muscles due to the movement air provides. Air is present in

the process of eliminating, in childbirth, sneezing, talking, laughing, and even thinking. Ever felt like your mind was racing? That's the air element manifesting in the microcosm of your mind. We feel the wind on our skin; it's connected with the sense of touch.

Being lit on fire. We see many different kinds of fire in the world around us — from forest fires to campfires to the sun, which is one big ball of fire. Unlike air, which is invisible, fire is connected with the sense of vision; the most pain-free way to perceive fire is by seeing it. Fire burns when you touch it. The nature of fire is to transform anything and everything that comes into contact with it. In your body, the fire element is responsible for the transformation process that occurs whenever you metabolize your food, as your body converts food into nutrients that give you health, vitality, and strength. This digestion process is the key to good health in Ayurveda. Hence, the presence of a healthy amount of the fire element in your body is very important. You'll learn more about why in [chapter 1](#).

The fire element is also connected with the process of digesting information and assimilating it into knowledge, which will begin happening as you put into practice what you read in this book. Have you ever felt like your mind was on fire with ideas, motivation, and creativity? Intelligence and confidence stem from the presence of healthy fire in your mind and body.

The eternal flow of water. Water comprises about 97 percent of the earth's surface. We see it in the oceans, rivers, lakes, seas, floods, and rains. The water element plays a vital role in your body, too. Water is an essential ingredient in your blood, urine, sweat, saliva, bodily tissues, spinal fluid, and tears. If you suffer from

obesity, Ayurveda believes this is a sign of too much of the water element in your system, as water is a primary ingredient of body fat. Water is connected to your emotions, like how your eyes water with tears. The water element is something you can taste; it's connected with the sense of taste. Water also manifests in your mind as the sweetness of emotions. Love, compassion, and satisfaction are all connected to the water element.

“For the one who is wise, the whole world is a teacher.”

— Ayurvedic text *Ashtanga Hridayam*

Standing on solid earth. “Solid as a rock” is a great way to describe the presence of the earth element. You can also see the sturdiness of the earth in the grounded nature of the tree, the stability of the mountain, the hardness of nuts, and the rooted quality of vegetables that grow underground. In your body, the earth element expresses itself in your skin, bones, nails, teeth, hair, and tendons. This element gives you the power of perseverance to stay the course. Loyalty, supportiveness, and growth are all characteristics of the earth, as are emotional grounding and stability. The ability to smell the sweet fragrance of flowers blooming in the springtime is due to the earth element, which is connected with the sense of smell.

By remembering that the macrocosm is within me (the microcosm), I have become a deeper student of life by learning from everything, and everyone, I find. Each person I meet, every animal, plant, and tree I see, and the eternal sun, moon, wind, and sky are my teachers. I greet challenging situations as teachers, too.



THE THREE DOSHAS

In Ayurveda, the five great elements combine in different ways to form three mind-body types, called doshas:

Air and space form **vata dosha**. This bioforce is connected with any and all movements in the body. A balanced vata dosha gives you visionary and creative qualities, along with flexibility (literally and figuratively). When imbalanced, it manifests as anxiety, pain, emaciation, and more. There are 80 diseases connected with vata.

Fire and water combine to create **pitta dosha**, which is all about transformation. A balanced pitta gives you the ability to be an excellent leader, make tough decisions, and perform critical analyses. Imbalanced pitta creates burning sensations and 40 different diseases, including heartburn, hot flashes, and inflammation.

Earth and water coalesce to make up **kapha dosha**. It's responsible for growth and stability. Balanced kapha makes for perseverance, nurturing, and stamina. Imbalanced kapha leads to 20 diseases, including obesity and diabetes.

Like Increases Like

You (the microcosm) interact with the world around you (the macrocosm) under the natural law of “Like increases like.” Here’s a practical example: my skin gets dry and my joints start cracking in summertime, when it’s hotter and drier in the atmosphere, so I especially love oiling my body during the summertime (you can learn how to do this beautiful practice [here](#)). The moist, unctuous oil, which has the exact opposite quality of the dryness on my skin, moisturizes my body. My dry skin is reduced due to application of a dissimilar substance (oil). It’s so simple. And it really works.

In a broader understanding of “Like increases like,” negativity begets negativity, as seen by the downward spiral of addictions. Fortunately, the opposite is equally true: the more you make positive choices in your life, the more positive choices you can make.

LESSON 4

Follow the Sun’s Cycles for an Empowered Daily Lifestyle

The sun has a very special place in Vedic spirituality. It is the source of all of life. Ayurveda reveres the sun as a symbol of health, wealth, power, creativity, joy, spiritual illumination, and abundance. The ancient teachings of Ayurveda reveal how our recommended daily routines revolve around the sun, which we’ll explore in detail in [chapter 8](#).

The sun is connected with the fire element, and, according to Ayurveda, the strength of the fire element within your body is responsible for your digestion. Healthy digestion is the key to good overall health. There's a direct relationship between the strength of the sun in the sky and the strength of your digestive fire, which is like an inner sun. Ayurveda recommends eating your largest meal around noon, as that's the time of the day when the sun is strongest.

The spiritual rituals described in chapters 6 and 7 will help you establish a personal relationship with the sun to strengthen your spiritual power. I found it extremely helpful to begin my Ayurveda lifestyle with these rituals, which gave me the willpower to put the physical practices (diet and lifestyle changes) of Ayurveda into action. The spiritual sun rituals will support you in developing a deeper spiritual connection in your daily life.

LESSON 5

Follow the Ebb and Flow of the Seasons for Abiding Health All Year Round

In chapter 9, I'll describe how the five great elements and three doshas play out in the macrocosm and in your own mind and body. You'll learn how to take advantage of the seasons that are better for building health, and how to protect yourself in the seasons when your health is naturally considered more at risk.

Nothing is random in Ayurveda. There's a reason why you normally experience certain conditions during certain times of the year, like colds and allergies in springtime. Ayurveda's seasonal diet and lifestyle recommendations give you tools and insights into how you can eat, drink, exercise, work, travel, and even procreate in optimal ways throughout the year.

Before Ayurveda, I was accustomed to eating whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted, and suffered poor digestion as a result. Following Ayurveda's seasonal wisdom has tremendously improved my own and my clients' health. Knowing what to eat and how to modify my lifestyle depending on the time of year is a wonderful way that I now live in harmony with nature.

Living by Ayurveda's wisdom has changed my life forever. I am honored and delighted to welcome you onto your wellness journey so that you, too, may experience the power and potential of this art and science of healthy living.

PART 1

Healing Your Body





CHAPTER 1

Food as Medicine

Ayurveda completely transformed my relationship with food. When I was a teenager, I used food like a drug, numbing my mind and heart from all that felt out of control in my life. I used to starve myself for long periods of time, thinking that I was somehow gaining greater self-mastery. In actuality, my body was wasting away from a potentially deadly psychiatric disorder: anorexia. I was also suffering from other conditions, such as anxiety, insomnia, excessive fear, and acne.



When I began eating at Vedika Global, however, I felt much better physically *and* mentally. Eating according to Ayurveda empowered me to overcome all of my physical health challenges within just a few months. Over a longer period of time, this led directly to healing my mind and, ultimately, to transforming my spiritual consciousness (a beautiful continual process).

Now, when people approach me to learn how to experience more wellbeing in life, I always tell them it starts with food. Along with sleep and balanced sexuality, food is one of the three sub-pillars (*upastambhas*) of health — and the most important.

The ancient spiritual text *Chandogya Upanishad* emphasizes the purity of food and its ability to heal our body and mind. In Ayurveda's understanding of purity, undigested food becomes toxicity in our body, called *ama* or *raam* in Sanskrit. Ama is a causative factor in physical and even mental diseases. Hence, food is healing only to the extent we can actually digest it, and thereby convert it into nutrients our body can utilize to create good health. We are not only what we eat, but what we digest. Thus, we want to keep our bodies free of toxins.

When we eat a pure and wholesome diet, we can experience perfect digestion. Our mind, intellect, and ego are able to start to become purified, too. We begin to experience a calmer, clearer mind. And only with a calm, pure mind can we actually reach for spiritual freedom (*moksha*), which is the ultimate goal of the science of Ayurveda.

There is a famous Ayurvedic proverb: “When diet is correct, medicine is of no need; when diet is incorrect, medicine is of no use.” Hippocrates, father of modern medicine, similarly stated: “Make food thy medicine and medicine thy food.”

Wishing you much health and joy as you heal your diet.

*Eating according to Ayurveda's vast wisdom gives you
food for your body, mind, and spirit.*



BENEFITS OF EATING ACCORDING TO AYURVEDA'S WISDOM

- Mental clarity
 - Beautiful voice
 - Longevity
 - Satisfaction
 - Glowing complexion
 - Sharp intellect and memory
 - Excellent immunity
 - Strong digestive power
 - Physical and mental strength
 - Nourishment
-



PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

Throughout this book I have included experiences from students and private clients from various “Take Health Into Your Own Hands” trainings, workshops, and one-on-one health consultations I've given at conferences, universities, companies, and nonprofits. You can learn more about these Ayurveda trainings in [Resources](#).



Eat warm, cooked, gently
oiled foods.



This may come as a surprise, given how much salads are touted as the classic healthy food choice, but cold, raw, uncooked foods are difficult for your digestive system. Ayurveda compares your

digestive capacity to a physical fire, which you extinguish whenever you consume excess cold foods.

It is best to eat warm, cooked, and oiled foods, as all of these factors help food to kindle your digestive system and travel smoothly through the digestive channels of your body. We learn in physics that heat expands, while cold contracts. Ayurveda envisions the body as possessing channels or pipe-like pathways called *srota*, which are responsible for transporting and circulating nutrients, and for elimination. All of these bodily channels need to stay open and unclogged for optimal health.

When you consume cold foods, you constrict your body's digestive channels, making your food sit in your system for a longer time. Warm food, on the other hand, keeps all of your channels open and flowing, serving to kindle your digestive fire, thus supporting healthy elimination. Cooking your food “pre-digests” it for you, meaning your digestive system doesn't need to work as hard.

Having the right amount of oil ensures your food can travel smoothly through your body's digestive and elimination passageways. Typically, about 1 teaspoon of oil is good, although it's beneficial to modify the amount throughout the year (see [chapter 9](#)) and according to your individual health needs. The type of oil you choose also varies throughout the year, though ghee can be safely used anytime.

Even if you can't cook your food, due to time constraints, traveling, or lack of kitchen, simply choosing warm instead of cold foods can make a huge difference in your digestion and overall health.



Drink water (preferably boiled water) only when you're actually thirsty.

Just as warm, cooked foods are preferred to cold, raw ones in Ayurveda, so, too, is warm, boiled water preferable to cold. Cold water, good for putting out a physical fire, also diminishes your inner digestive fire. Boiling helps lighten the quality of the water, making it easier for your body to digest. Once water has been boiled, you can drink it for the next 24 hours. Even if the water cools to room temperature, the fact that it has been boiled makes it much easier to digest (though warm, boiled water is best if you need elimination support).

This is not to say that you should chug gallons of hot water a day. Nowadays, we are conditioned to drink at least eight glasses of water a day. We are also told that if we wait to drink until we are thirsty, we'll be dehydrated. (Not surprisingly, the water bottle industry was beginning to boom just as this myth started circulating.)

Feeling thirsty isn't a sign you're already dehydrated. Ayurveda classifies thirst as one of your body's natural urges, akin to the urges of hunger, sneezing, burping, yawning, sleeping, and eliminating waste (learn more [here](#)). Just as you wouldn't want to

try to force yourself to urinate when you don't feel the urge, Ayurveda says you need not force yourself to drink water to avoid feeling thirsty. Drinking way too much water can cause water intoxication (hyponatremia), in which your nerve impulses, kidneys, and brain can get seriously, and sometimes fatally, stressed.

If you're thirsty, drink boiled water until you're satisfied. Then stop. It's really that simple.



Embrace certain dairy products.



ABOVE: *Takra, a light spiced yogurt drink (see [recipe](#)), is a fantastic way to boost your digestive power.*

Dairy is shunned in certain circles. It is thought to be responsible for a number of ailments, from digestive upsets to acne. Ayurveda, however, embraces certain dairy products and suggests that it's not just what you are consuming but how you are consuming it that disturbs you. Even those who thought they were lactose intolerant (myself included) find that they can consume the dairy products Ayurveda recommends.

Ghee. Ayurveda heavily emphasizes clarified butter, or ghee — so much so that several Ayurvedic texts devote a whole chapter to it. Ghee (see [recipe](#)) is extremely beneficial to your digestive health. In the Ayurvedic text *Bhavaprakash*, ghee's benefits are described:

Ghee is rejuvenating, sweet in taste, good for vision, kindles digestive fire, removes poison and inauspiciousness, bestows luster, courage, beauty, good voice and memory, increases intelligence, prolongs life, gives strength, cures gas in the abdomen, fever, insanity, abdominal pain, ulcers, increases immunity, benefits herpes and diseases of the blood.

Modern research has started validating what the ancient Ayurvedic sages have known for thousands of years: ghee is tremendously good for you. It is the highest known food source of butyric acid, a beneficial fatty acid that boosts immunity, supports healthy levels of cholesterol, reduces fatty tissues, increases energy production, and regulates elimination. You can learn more in the references section.

You can cook meat and vegetables in ghee, and add warmed ghee to cooked lentils. You can also add a small spoonful of ghee to dry, light foods like popcorn and salads. Ghee helps increase digestibility without causing vata dosha (the gaseous bioforce) to build up excessively in the body as uncomfortable bloating and

constipation. You may be pleasantly surprised to know that Ayurveda even recommends ghee to those seeking to lose weight and those suffering from diabetes. I would, of course, recommend less ghee to those who are trying to lose weight. You can consume ghee even if you're lactose intolerant, as the casein (dairy component) has been removed.

In Sanskrit, the word for “to oil” is *sneha*, which also means “to love.” Like any lasting love relationship, ghee gets better the longer you have it. So make a large supply of ghee and store it for long-term use.

Warm milk. I thought I was lactose intolerant before encountering Ayurveda, but then I learned I was only unable to digest milk because I was drinking it cold and unflavored. As with food and water, Ayurveda recommends consuming milk warm so it runs smoothly through your bodily channels. See [here](#) to learn how to make warm spiced milk for a satisfying and delicious treat.

Light spiced yogurt. Regular yogurt is heavy and does not promote good digestion for most people, but when whisked with water and spices, it forms a delicious and healthy treat called *takra* (see [recipe](#)).

Fresh cheese. Fresh cheeses that are typically not fermented, such as paneer (a type of cheese common in Indian cuisine), goat's milk cheese, fresh mozzarella, and fresh farmer cheese are fine when eaten in smaller quantities.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“When you taste ghee, you’ll love it, so make it your friend because it is also very beneficial. After including ghee in most of my food, I have not only lost weight, I also lowered my diabetic and cholesterol counts, to the delight of my Western physician!”

— Roopa

Ghee



INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups (8 sticks) unsalted organic butter

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Place the butter in a deep pot on high heat, stirring frequently until the butter melts and starts boiling. Turn the heat down to medium and cook until the butter looks clear. You'll hear

snapping, crackling, and popping sounds as the milk fat solids separate from the clarified butter. Continue cooking until the ghee is golden-colored with slightly browned solids at the bottom, 30 to 35 minutes.

- 2.** Remove the pan from the heat and allow the ghee to cool for about 30 minutes.
- 3.** Strain the ghee with a fine mesh strainer, which will catch the milk-fat solids.
- 4.** Pour the ghee into a 1-quart jar and allow it to sit without a lid until it cools completely. Store ghee in a cool place out of direct sunlight. Its medicinal properties will increase over time.



Mindfully part with or modify other dairy products.

Cold yogurt. Ayurveda warns against consuming yogurt straight out of the fridge. This is contrary to Western food dictums — we're told that yogurt is great for digestion and energy, due to its probiotics. Regular yogurt is heating, heavy, sticky, and sour. It clogs your bodily channels. It does not support the downward movement of bowels, which further contributes to its constipating effect.

In general, Ayurveda does not recommend fermented food, as it is one of the root causative factors for constipation. Given how important healthy digestion is in Ayurveda, we want to avoid constipation at all costs.

Cheese. This is another fermented food that is heavy to digest. Have you noticed how you feel unmotivated to move after eating a feast of fettuccine Alfredo or ravioli? The inertia you feel after eating cheese-filled foods is not healthy. It's indicative of a quality of dullness, darkness, and even depression called *tamas* (learn more in [chapter 5](#)). Only those who have very strong digestive fire can handle small quantities of cheese (see [here](#) to determine the strength of your digestion). The best time of the year to eat cheese is the winter, when digestive fire is naturally peaking (learn more in [chapter 9](#)).

Cream. Sour cream and most other types of milk cream used in soups and curries are not recommended by Ayurveda because they contribute to clogging bodily channels and cannot be easily digested. Anything undigested becomes a liability to your system.

Beneficial Dairy Products

- Ghee
- Butter (if you have very good digestion; see [here](#) to find out if you do)
- Takra (homemade Ayurvedic spiced yogurt drink)
- Warm, boiled whole milk
- Light fresh cheeses, like paneer, feta, goat, and mozzarella

Nonbeneficial Dairy Products

- Sour cream (and other types of creams)
- Frozen or sweetened yogurt
- Store-made ice cream
- Store-made buttermilk
- Cold milk
- 1 percent, 2 percent, or skim milk (cold or warm)
- Cream-based cheeses, such as Parmesan, cheddar, brie, and blue cheese



PARTING WITH BELOVED FOOD
ITEMS

I empathize completely if you're feeling separation anxiety from foods you've loved for years. After learning how harmful frozen yogurt is, I actually sat and "broke up" with it. In my head, I said, "Okay, Mr. Frozen Yogurt with sweet fruits, I know you are no good for me, and so it's time we part ways now. I am saying goodbye to you so I can say hello to greater health. Because I deserve better."



Avoid incompatible food combinations.

Some things just don't go together. Ayurveda teaches that certain food combinations can block your bodily channels and create skin problems, toxicity, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), fever, anemia, or indigestion.

Often when I meet clients, I see that the root cause of their problems — whether skin conditions, obesity, or respiratory issues — is eating incompatible foods. In general, avoid mixing raw and partially cooked foods. Here are some specific incompatibilities.

Milk should not be mixed with:

- Any fruit except figs, dates, raisins, and mango (this includes smoothies)
- Any vegetable (avoid creamy soups if made with milk or cream)
- Lentils, beans, and millet (except finger millet or *ragi*)
- Any meat or fish
- Sour-tasting foods
- Any alcohol
- Garlic
- Salt

Meat should not be paired with:

- Honey
- Sesame
- Milk
- Black gram lentils
- Radishes
- Sprouted grains

Bananas should avoid the company of:

- Milk
- Buttermilk

- Dates
- Black gram lentils

Honey should not be cooked and should be avoided in the summer and fall. It should also not be eaten with:

- Hot water (you shouldn't add honey even to teas)
- Radishes
- Ghee in equal quantities (you can have honey and ghee together in unequal quantities)

While it's not within the scope of this book to go into depth about how each of the incompatible food combinations can harm you, here are a few explanations.

When your body is digesting fruit and milk together, the fruit tends to curdle the milk in the stomach, leading to a lot of acidity and sourness. Milk and fish create obstructions in your bodily channels, which food must travel through to be assimilated into nutrients your body can use. Milk doesn't mix well with salt, as they have opposing qualities.

Bananas eaten with buttermilk or regular milk, and the other incompatible food combinations listed above, can lower your digestive power and create toxicity in your body, which leads to many other diseases and imbalances.

Simply eliminating incompatible food combinations in my own diet cleared up my skin and improved my digestion. Start saying goodbye to these combinations and saying hello to better health!



Observe your digestion to assess your overall health.

Do you experience pain, bloating, and heaviness upon elimination? Have headaches often, and inexplicable chest pain? Feel tired all the time, yet suffer from insomnia without a clue about why?

These are all signs your digestion could be compromised. In the West, we tend to think elimination and digestion are completely separate. Western doctors often won't say your digestion is disturbed when you have chronic constipation (and haven't eliminated for a few days). Ayurveda, however, sees digestion and elimination as deeply intertwined. When digestion is optimal, healthy elimination is the natural result. What benefits digestion also supports your elimination.

Having a healthy digestion is the best indicator of overall health in Ayurveda. Healthy digestion positively impacts your sleep quality and reduces stress, among other potent health benefits. It's importance cannot be overemphasized.

If your digestion is healthy, you:

- Feel the urge to eliminate one or two times a day
- Eliminate around the same time each day, ideally by 7:00 a.m.
- Have soft, well-formed, log-shaped stools

- Have yellowish-brown stools
- Have stools that float in the toilet
- Eliminate a consistent amount each day
- Feel ease in eliminating
- Feel very satisfied after eliminating

Observe your elimination in terms of its timing, consistency, and frequency. Think of it as a window into your health. If your stools don't follow the signs of healthy elimination, make adjustments, such as incorporating into your diet some of the recipes that follow.



Cook with love.

I'm always touched by how Chef Sanjai teaches and models the importance of cooking with love and positive thoughts, since your emotions and intentions are transmitted into your food. I believe sending positive vibrations is the biggest secret to making delicious-tasting food that gives you energy, vitality, and strength. Setting up your kitchen with photos that inspire you makes a big difference. You could even light a lamp (see [Light a lamp.](#)) before

cooking to help get into the right frame of mind of appreciation, love, and gratitude. All of this makes the whole journey of food, from preparation to consumption to digestion, a truly magical, spiritual experience.

Eating according to Ayurveda is one of the ways I give love to myself, and express that to those I love and serve.



Heal your digestion with takra.

Takra (see [photo](#)) is an incredible digestive antidote during colder seasons. While Ayurveda typically doesn't recommend eating cold yogurt because its dense, cold qualities can clog your bodily channels, this version lightens the yogurt by whisking it with water, transforming it into a health-promoting food. It's magical how a few small adjustments can make such a difference in a food's healing potency.

Takra benefits those suffering from piles, diabetes, abdominal tumors, diarrhea, many skin diseases, obesity, anemia, and more. Takra is particularly helpful anytime you experience loss of

appetite. When combined with *khichadi* (see Reclaim your health with khichadi.) in a mono diet, it can help those combating irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Note: Consume ideally before 3:00 p.m.; eat in moderation in the spring.

Takra

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- **2** cups water
- **1/2** cup organic whole cow's milk plain yogurt, room temperature
- **1/2** teaspoon cumin seeds, roasted and ground into powder
- **2 1/4** -inch pieces fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- **1** cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- Himalayan pink rock salt

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Boil water, then cool to room temperature. (Boiling the water makes it easier to digest.)
- 2.** Place the room-temperature yogurt in a small bowl and whisk for 2 minutes.
- 3.** Slowly add the water, cumin, ginger, cilantro, and rock salt to the yogurt. Continue whisking until takra is smooth and frothy, 1 to 2 minutes.



Start your day on a stress-free note
with sweet sooji cereal.



I grew up a milk-and-cereal-eating girl. When I learned how milk and ordinary cereal is an incompatible food combination, I happily switched to this sweet cereal substitute. Way tastier than the breakfast cereal of my childhood, sweet sooji cereal is a delicious

and delightful way to start your day. Many of my clients have healed from food-related allergies by following this recipe.

Wheat, the main ingredient in this cereal, facilitates healing fractures or broken bones, gives your body strength, and has an aphrodisiac quality. Consuming wheat regularly promotes a healthy complexion. The grounding earth element in the wheat helps you persevere through difficult circumstances; it is a great stress-busting and stresspreventing morning meal.

When I started eating this cereal, I noticed how it had a stabilizing effect on my mind. It makes me feel cheerful to begin the day, rather than anxious and stressed, as I used to feel when starting the day with milk and cereal. See [recipe](#) for a savory version.



AVOID LEFTOVERS

In Ayurveda, we strive to stay as close to nature as we can. Food loses its freshness quickly and starts to accumulate a lethargic quality known as *tamas*. Tamas can create a dark, stagnant feeling in the mind (you can learn more about it in [Chapter 5](#)). Hence, try to avoid eating food that was prepared more than one day before.

Sooji Cereal

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coarse semolina or all-purpose wheat flour
- **2** cups organic whole milk (can also combine 1 cup milk with 1 cup water)
- **2** teaspoons green cardamom powder
- **4–6** threads of saffron (optional)
- **4–6** teaspoons organic coconut or cane sugar
- **2** teaspoons raisins (optional)
- **2** tablespoons almonds or walnuts, chopped finely (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Place the semolina in a small skillet over medium heat. Dry-roast until it's a light brown color, about 2 minutes, then set aside.
- 2.** Combine the milk, cardamom, and saffron, if using, in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
- 3.** Turn the heat to low and slowly add the semolina while continuously stirring to avoid creating lumps.
- 4.** Add the sugar, and raisins and nuts, if using. Slowly stir for 2 to 3 minutes.



Reclaim your health with khichadi.



Made of cooked green and/or yellow mung dal lentils, white rice, and a variety of spices, *khichadi* (also called *kitchari*) is one of Ayurveda's superfoods. Almost all Indians know khichadi as a

healing food. Khichadi is such a go-to food that I widely recommend it to clients struggling with a variety of health challenges. It can be made with a number of seasonal spices and vegetables (see the [Seasonal Food Guide](#) for ideas), so you can continually experience different flavors.

Filling, yet light, it's wonderful for yoga practitioners who want to go deeper into their spiritual practices, as it brings about a calm mental state. For those who want to cleanse the body, it is helpful to eat a diet of khichadi and takra (a spiced yogurt drink; see [recipe](#)) for about 7 to 10 days (or until toxins disappear).

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“For nearly my entire life, I struggled with digestive problems. I was extremely motivated to follow Ayurveda’s digestion suggestions during pregnancy — and they worked like a charm! Ananta’s suggestions for lunch and dinnertime included eating vegetables cooked in ghee and mild spices. Almost immediately after following this advice, my digestion improved to the best state it’s ever been.”

— Melissa

Khichadi

Serves 2-3

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white basmati rice
- **1** cup green or yellow mung dal (you can also use $\frac{1}{2}$ cup yellow and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup green dal)
- Himalayan pink rock salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon turmeric powder
- **2** teaspoons ghee
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cumin seeds
- Fresh cilantro, chopped, for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Rinse the rice and dal, then add to a medium saucepan. Add enough water to cover the rice and dal by 1 inch and soak for 3 to 4 hours if possible (or at least 30 minutes).
- 2.** Place the pot on the stove over high heat. Heat until it boils, then reduce the heat to low. Add the rock salt and turmeric and cook, stirring occasionally, until it has a mushy consistency, 20 to 25 minutes. Add additional water if preferred, or cook until it becomes as dry as you like.

3. Place the ghee in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the cumin seeds and cook until the seeds start crackling, about 10 to 15 seconds or less.
4. Pour the warmed ghee mixture into the pot with the rice and dal. Serve with fresh cilantro for added flavor and digestive power.

Time-saving tip: *Invest in a slow cooker. You can start cooking lentils and vegetables in it in the morning and they will be ready for you by dinner.*



Sleep like a baby with spiced milk.



Spiced milk is a truly delicious treat that promotes sound, sweet sleep when drunk at night (especially when made with nutmeg). This is the only substance Ayurveda recommends consuming just

before sleeping. You can also enjoy it anytime — in the morning for breakfast, or as a lunch or dinner meal substitute. When consumed during the day, it will give you energy and strength.

This special milk gives your mind a wonderful feeling of clarity, balance, and peacefulness, called *sattva* in Sanskrit. What's more, according to Ayurveda, warm milk is the best aphrodisiac food, helps delay the aging process, reduces constipation (it has a mild laxative effect and hence is not recommended if you have diarrhea), and soothes your heart and bleeding conditions. I drink it daily. I'm officially in love with it.

Note: Enjoy this recipe as a meal by itself, or at least 3 hours after your last meal. (Remember: milk is not compatible with meat, fish, lentils, fruits, or vegetables.) If you find cow's milk too heavy, the best alternative is goat's milk. However, many who are lactose intolerant find they can digest spiced milk. If your digestion is strong (see [Observe your digestion to assess your overall health](#), to find out), you can simply warm 1 cup of milk; you don't need to add water or reduce the mixture.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“My grandson hasn't been able to drink milk for a really long time, because he would get gas and other problems, but now he's drinking warm spiced milk and the gas is gone. That's amazing.”

— Sherry

Spiced Milk

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- **2** cups organic whole cow's milk
- **8** cups water (optional; see [note](#) above)
- **4–6** saffron threads
- **4–6** crushed green cardamom pods
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon turmeric powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon powder (optional)
- Pinch of dry ginger powder (optional)
- Pinch of nutmeg powder (optional; only at night)
- **2–4** teaspoons organic sugar (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Place the milk and water, if using, in a large pot over medium heat.
- 2.** Crush the saffron with your fingertips as you add it to the milk.
- 3.** Add the cardamom and turmeric, and the cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg, if using, and then increase the heat to high.
- 4.** When the milk starts boiling, reduce the heat slightly and stir periodically to make sure the milk doesn't boil over. If using

water, cook until the mixture is reduced to 1 cup, about 45 minutes. If not using water, allow it to simmer for 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from the heat and strain if needed.

5. Stir in the sugar, if using, and enjoy when sufficiently cooled.



Calm your mind and body with opo squash.



Another Ayurveda superfood, opo squash promotes mental clarity, balance, optimism, and peace of mind. A great nourishing food, it also benefits your heart. It is easily digestible and tastes sweet.

This opo squash recipe is a personal favorite. I love how grounded and clear-headed it makes me feel, and I recommend it for anyone experiencing mental stress and turbulent emotions. It goes great with cooked rice, chappatis, warm wheat tortillas, and khichadi. You can buy opo squash at Indian or Chinese markets. If you can't find it, you can substitute any winter or summer squash (depending on the season; see [Seasonal Food Guide](#)).

Cooked Opo Squash

Serves 2-3

INGREDIENTS

- **2** teaspoons ghee
- **1/2** teaspoon cumin seeds
- **1/2** teaspoon turmeric powder
- **1/2** cup chopped onions
- **1** pound opo squash, peeled and diced into **1/2** -inch cubes
- Fresh cilantro, chopped, for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Warm the ghee in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the cumin seeds and turmeric and cook for 10 to 15 seconds (be careful not to burn the cumin seeds).
- 2.** Stir in the onions and cook, uncovered, for 2 to 3 minutes.
- 3.** Add the opo squash and stir again. Cover the skillet and cook until the squash is soft enough that you can easily cut it with a spoon, 20 to 25 minutes. Garnish with freshly chopped cilantro.



Soothe your soul with mung dal soup.



There's nothing quite like a satisfying bowl of mung dal soup on those days I am seeking soul food. Light and easily digestible, mung

dal can help alleviate fevers, ulcers, and blood-related disorders. The recipe is easily adaptable. You can make it with several different kinds of dals (whole green gram, yellow lentils, red lentils, and split green gram). Add any vegetables you enjoy and serve with white rice or tortillas if desired — or just eat it by itself. It's delicious in all ways!

Mung Dal Soup

Serves 2-3

INGREDIENTS

- **1** cup yellow or green mung dal
- **1/2** teaspoon turmeric powder
- Himalayan pink rock salt
- **2** teaspoons ghee
- **1/2** teaspoon cumin seeds
- **1** medium-size onion, chopped (optional)
- Fresh cilantro, chopped, for serving (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Rinse and drain the mung dal, then place in a medium bowl. Add enough water to cover the dal by 1 inch and soak for about 3 to 4 hours beforehand (or overnight). Drain and rinse.
- 2.** Combine the mung dal, turmeric, and salt to taste in a pot. Add enough water to cover dal by about 1 inch and bring to a boil. Lower heat to medium-low and cook until it looks mushy or pasta-like, 25 to 30 minutes. You can add more water once it finishes cooking to make it the consistency you desire.
- 3.** Place ghee in a skillet on medium heat. Add the cumin seeds and swirl until fragrant. Then add the onions, if using, and

sauté until pink and soft, 5 to 10 minutes.

- 4.** Combine the ghee mixture with the cooked dal and garnish with the cilantro, if using.



CHAPTER 2

The Magical Healing World of Ayurvedic Spices

Because digestion is the key to great overall health according to Ayurveda, it's essential to keep the digestive fire strong inside your body. The primary healing spices in this chapter — turmeric, cumin, Himalayan pink rock salt, and coriander — help strengthen your digestion, thereby contributing to your overall health.



Contrary to the common perception that healthy food must taste bland, in Ayurveda, food must stimulate your taste buds, as the sight, smell, and taste of your food impact how well you'll digest it. Ayurveda says food must be healthy *and* flavorful.

I immediately noticed a big difference in my own digestion and overall health when I started mindfully incorporating Ayurvedic spices into my meals. My students, too, who come from different racial and cultural backgrounds and are used to eating all kinds of foods, unanimously love the Ayurvedic dishes I feed them in classes and trainings. These spices make it possible for them to continue enjoying foods they're currently eating by helping them digest their food better.

Armed with these medicinal spices, you can find relief from issues ranging from menstrual pain to the common cold. The mere presence of these spices in my kitchen inspires me to manifest radiant health each day. I invite you to avail yourself of the magical powers of these humble, but mighty, Ayurvedic spice friends in the preparations and recipes that follow.



NOT ALL INDIAN FOOD IS AYURVEDIC

Many people wrongly equate Ayurvedic food with Indian food. They contain many common ingredients, but how these ingredients are used and combined greatly differs. Ayurvedic cooking contains fewer ingredients, takes much less time, and often tastes fresher because the natural flavors are highlighted. The first time I fed my family Ayurvedic food, they were scared that it wouldn't taste as good as the Indian food they were accustomed to. They were shocked when they tried my food! They loved the revitalizing and energizing feeling (called *prana* in the yoga and Ayurveda traditions) that the food contained, as well as its simplicity and freshness.



Use turmeric for good health on the
inside and out.



Turmeric is a friend that can help you on the inside (when you cook with it) and outside (when applied on your skin). It is also called *sri kanya*, which means “the one who bestows happiness and

prosperity.” As health is a type of wealth, physical wellbeing attracts financial health. Turmeric is a great spice to boost your immunity.

When used regularly in cooking, turmeric supports your digestive system by making your food more appetizing. Its cleansing effect helps free you from toxicity while fighting excess fat and ulcers. After it is digested, it purifies your blood. Small, regular doses of turmeric, therefore, are of real benefit if you suffer from anemia or any other blood-based disease. It also has a fabulous anti-inflammatory effect.

Anytime you need a makeover, turmeric is there to help. This spice is known for enhancing your complexion and is widely used in cosmetics to minimize dark spots and blemishes. It’s great for combating acne and wrinkles, too. See [here](#) for one of my favorite anti-acne, anti-wrinkle facial recipes using turmeric. Eating turmeric and applying it topically (mix a small amount with water or milk and use as a facewash) can greatly improve your skin’s complexion, tone, and texture. I love washing my face in the morning with a pinch of turmeric, red sandalwood powder, and neem powder.



GO SLOW

After reading about how great turmeric is for your skin, sometimes people get excited and start using it in large doses. However, it's important to follow the quantities recommended in this book or by your Ayurvedic practitioner. Just a quarter of a

teaspoon of turmeric per person in your food on a regular basis will work wonders.

Turmeric arrests bleeding when applied externally and works as a wonderful antiseptic, anti-itch solution. In fact, turmeric is so beneficial for wound healing that in India, Johnson & Johnson manufactured a special turmeric-infused Band-Aid! For cuts and bruises, simply make a paste with turmeric powder and a little water and apply directly to the wound. A potent healing tonic for those suffering from post-accident trauma is whole milk cooked with turmeric and perhaps some sugar.

For those of you dealing with thrush, recurring sore throat, oral herpes, or any other kind of oral infection or throat issue, boil a pinch or two of turmeric in a pot of water and drink hot. Turmeric will help clear your lungs of obstructions.

Turmeric is drying. Since Ayurveda believes that obesity and diabetes are both caused by too much of the water element in the body, turmeric's drying effect helps you lose weight and lower your diabetic count. Turmeric also benefits watery nose, eyes, and swelling.



WHEN TO AVOID TURMERIC

The only time I limit my turmeric consumption is during my period. Turmeric tends to increase menstrual blood flow, so it's

great for women who have scanty periods but better reduced for those who don't.



Sprinkle cumin on any savory food
to improve digestion.



I can't think of a single savory Ayurvedic dish that *doesn't* have cumin in it. Cumin is a powerful ally to call upon for digestive health. It is no coincidence that one of the many synonyms for this pervasive Ayurvedic spice is *jarana*, or "that which brings about digestion." My teacher put it so aptly when she shared, "Cumin is like a matchstick that ignites fire in your body in case your internal stovetop isn't working."

This pungent, heating herb can help you digest any savory food. Its taste is subtle enough that you can add cumin powder to dishes ranging from Italian pastas to pizza, fajitas, or fried rice. And, unlike other heating herbs, which are best restricted to winter and spring, you can use cumin any time of the year.

Cumin is an excellent spice to use anytime you need an appetite boost. Roasting cumin seeds on a dry skillet until they become

slightly darker, but not black, adds more dryness and heat, which helps increase cumin's potency to crank up your digestion. Just the fragrant smell of freshly roasted cumin seeds is enough to immediately ignite my appetite.

To combat nausea, simply sprinkle some cumin seeds or powder onto a lemon slice and lick it sporadically for quick relief. For diarrhea, drink warm water mixed with 1 teaspoon of cumin powder.

For women with menstrual spotting, irregular cycles, or clotting, this spice is your friend. Cumin also reduces inflammation, helps prevent problems like endometriosis, and is extremely beneficial for post-pregnancy women. It's an excellent spice for healthy breast milk. The key to receiving all of these benefits is to increase the quantity of cumin you consume. An easy way to do this is to simply boil water with roasted cumin powder in it, and then drink this concoction. You can also cook with cumin seeds, and then sprinkle cumin powder onto your food.

You can create a powerful pain-relieving paste by grinding the seeds into powder and combining them with a little bit of water. Apply cumin paste to any painful and swollen areas for fast-acting support.

***Tip:** Invest in a mortar and pestle to hand-grind your spices into potent powders that will give you much better flavor than commercially sourced spice powders.*



Help lose weight with Himalayan pink rock salt.

All salts are not equal. Standard table salt comes from the sea. According to Ayurveda, sea salt has more of the subtle water element, which can create water retention and cause you to gain weight. Himalayan pink rock salt comes from the land. It's more connected with the earth element than ordinary sea salt and hence will not lead to water retention. Rock salt crystals also contain 84 of the 92 trace elements your body needs, such as potassium, magnesium, zinc, iron, and calcium.

My clients who are trying to lose weight always notice that substituting rock salt for sea salt makes a difference in achieving their weight-loss goals. As a bonus, the fire element in rock salt is less sharp and intense than it is in sea salt, so it helps prevent burning in your body and relieves skin conditions.

But maybe one of its best traits is that it makes your food taste delicious! Just as different salts have different health properties, they have subtly different flavors. Some people notice that Himalayan pink rock salt has a gentle, slightly sweet taste, lacking harshness.

Himalayan pink rock salt is excellent for promoting digestion. To stimulate your appetite and improve elimination, try adding a

pinch of it to a small piece of freshly grated ginger before meals. If you suffer from constipation, add a pinch of Himalayan pink rock salt to 10 to 15 soaked seedless raisins (or 5 to 8 soaked jumbo black raisins) and eat before sleeping.

You'll want to eat a balanced amount of salt in your diet. The concept of quantity is very important in Ayurveda. It is recommended that you eat more salt in certain seasons and less salt in others (see [chapter 9](#) for specific guidelines).



Connect with coriander and
cilantro: your emotional support
system.



Coriander and cilantro are wonderful Ayurvedic spice friends you can call upon anytime you're feeling down. In English, we have separate terms for the cilantro plant's edible parts: its leaves are called cilantro and its seeds are coriander. In Sanskrit, however, there is only one word for the cilantro plant. One of coriander's synonyms in Sanskrit is *hrdaya*, which means "heart." Coriander (and cilantro) help both your physical and emotional heart.

The mere smell of cilantro comforts your heart and uplifts your spirit. I remember feeling pleasantly surprised when my teacher

suggested growing a big patch of cilantro and even lying down in it to receive its heartening benefits.

I love brightening up my food with a garnish of cilantro leaves. Cilantro is especially helpful for freshening food anytime I have to eat meals that are left over from earlier in the day or the day before.

Unlike most spices that boost your digestive fire, coriander and cilantro simultaneously boost your digestion while cooling your body. When the weather is hot I like to boil water with coriander seeds and drink this cooling tonic periodically throughout the day. This tonic is especially soothing if you have any heat-related conditions, such as heartburn, acid reflux, hemorrhoids, or heat-related headaches.

To make another wonderful digestive tonic, mix 1 teaspoon of cumin powder with 1 teaspoon of coriander powder in twice the amount of water you'd like to drink. Boil and reduce the water by half, then drink when cool. This helps relieve gas, bloating, colic pain, and constipation.

In its powder form, coriander makes a fabulous curry. One of Chef Sanjai's secrets to making curry taste so yummy is to wait to add the coriander powder until the vegetables are halfway through cooking. This makes the most of the flavor and texture in the dish.



Invite a fiery fivesome into your diet and life.



Ajwain seeds, fresh and dry ginger, black pepper, mustard seeds, and fenugreek seeds are excellent heating spices for igniting your digestive fire. You can freely enjoy them in winter and spring. They are also a great crew to call upon for help digesting heavier foods, like meat, as well as for weight loss. You can add them to any of the savory recipes in this book.

Also called bishop's weed seeds, ajwain seeds look like cumin but smell and taste more like thyme. These highly fragrant seeds are particularly helpful for bloating and pain relief. I love boiling them in water and drinking ajwain tea on the rare occasions I feel abdominal pain.

Ginger is called a great medicine (*maha aushadhi*) in Ayurveda. The dry form of ginger is a powerful force to fight against spring afflictions like colds, asthma, sore throats, runny nose, and diarrhea. Anytime I feel a cold coming on or need to stop a runny nose, I apply a paste made of dry ginger powder and water on my nose and under my eyes for as long as comfortable. To stop diarrhea, add a pinch of dry ginger to warm water and drink.

Cooking with fresh ginger, mustard seeds, and black pepper is an excellent way to prevent and reduce respiratory challenges and seasonal allergies. In addition to being part of the fiery fivesome

for boosting digestive fire, fenugreek seeds (and leaves) are also a pregnant woman's best friend, as they relieve breast tenderness and promote healthy breast milk.



Benefit from your true blue friends.

Curry leaves, pomegranate seed powder, and mango powder are like true blue friends who are always there for you. They are all great for digestion, especially in the warmer seasons, and add wonderful flavor to your food.

Pomegranate is considered one of Ayurveda's superfoods. Both pomegranate seeds and powder (also called *anardana* powder) build your bodily strength and fertility, and are nourishing yet light for digestion — a rare combination. Like coriander, pomegranate is a *hrdaya* spice, meaning that it supports your physical heart and helps balance your emotions, picking you up if you're feeling low or bringing you down if you're getting too high.

Curry leaves are unique in that they're neither heating nor cooling, but they do wonders to spark appetite (just the smell of them cooking in ghee makes me hungry). They also promote good

digestion without creating the possibility of overheating the body, as some of the fiery five can do.

Mango powder, also called *amchur* powder, is a delicious cooling spice. I like to use it more in the summer and fall to help prevent burning sensations and keep me cool and calm in the heat.



Make Ayurvedic veggie pilaf with many healing spices.

This super-easy, delicious recipe comes together quickly, so it makes a great weeknight meal. Use any variety of veggies that you enjoy — this recipe is just one combination that I love. It involves many of the healing spices outlined earlier.

Ayurvedic Veggie Pilaf

Serves 2-3

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white basmati rice, rinsed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped onion
- **15-20** green beans, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ head cauliflower, chopped
- **1** large carrot, chopped
- **1** yellow squash, chopped
- **1** teaspoon turmeric
- Himalayan pink rock salt
- **2** teaspoons ghee
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cumin seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fennel seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ajwain seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fenugreek seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pomegranate seed powder
- **1** $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch piece fresh ginger, grated
- **1** clove garlic, finely chopped
- Cilantro for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

-
- 1.** Place the rice in a large pot and add enough water to cover by 1 to 2 inches. Rinse until the water is clear.
 - 2.** Add the onion, green beans, cauliflower, carrot, yellow squash, turmeric, and rock salt to taste to the pot over high heat. Bring water to near boiling, then reduce the heat to low and cook until the water is completely absorbed and the vegetables are soft enough to cut with a spoon, 20 to 25 minutes.
 - 3.** Heat the ghee in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the cumin seeds, fennel seeds, ajwain seeds, fenugreek seeds, pomegranate seed powder, ginger, and garlic. Cook until fragrant, 10 to 15 seconds. Stir the spiced ghee into the pot of cooked rice and veggies and add cilantro to garnish, if using.



Try Ayurvedic fries for a healthy take on comfort food.

Here's a creative spin on French fries from Chef Sanjai's fabulous collection. I love the sheer simplicity of this recipe, which calls for only a few ingredients. They taste much better than store-bought

fries and make for a satisfying snack or meal substitute. They're also great with cilantro chutney (see [recipe](#)).

Ayurvedic Fries

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- **2** tablespoons ghee
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cumin seeds or roasted cumin powder
- **3–4** potatoes or sweet potatoes, cut into long pieces
- Himalayan pink rock salt

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Heat ghee in a large skillet over medium heat.
- 2.** Add the cumin seeds and cook for 10 to 15 seconds or less, taking care not to burn the seeds.
- 3.** Add the potatoes and rock salt, cover, and cook until crispy, 5 to 10 minutes.



Enjoy a savory sooji dish.



Sooji is a wheat/semolina dish that has a porridge-like consistency. Wheat is one of the most commonly used staple foods in many parts of the world. In Ayurveda, wheat strengthens, rejuvenates, soothes ulcers, increases appetite, heals fractures, and generally enhances stability. Roasting the wheat makes it lighter and easier to digest. This delicious recipe hits the spot for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. I love how easy and fast it is to make (15 to 20 minutes). See [recipe](#) for sweet sooji cereal.

Savory Sooji

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coarse semolina
- **1–2** teaspoons ghee
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon mustard seeds (in winter or spring) or cumin seeds (in summer and fall)
- **5–7** curry leaves
- **1** cup finely chopped onion
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen organic peas (boil these in water before cooking)
- **2** carrots, diced (optional; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup squash and zucchini (optional)
- Himalayan pink rock salt
- Fresh cilantro, chopped, for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Dry-roast the semolina in a small skillet, over medium heat, until it's light brown, about 5 minutes. Set aside. (You can also dry-roast a larger quantity and store it for future use.)
- 2.** Heat the ghee in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the mustard seeds and curry leaves and swirl until fragrant and the seeds pop, 10 to 15 seconds.

- 3.** Add the onions to the ghee mixture and sauté until they look pink, 5 to 6 minutes.
- 4.** Add the peas and the carrots, squash, and zucchini, if using, and salt to taste. Cover and cook on medium-low heat until the vegetables are soft, 5 to 6 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 5.** Add 3 cups of water to the vegetables and bring to boil. Slowly mix in the semolina, stirring to prevent lumps. Cover and cook on low heat until it becomes the consistency you like, 1 to 3 minutes. Garnish with cilantro, if using.



Cook easily digestible mung dal
pancakes for breakfast.



Mung dal, being light and easy to digest, makes for a very sattvic meal — a meal that promotes balance and peace of mind (see [Sattva](#) to learn more about this quality). Mung dal pancakes are a

great breakfast for combating stress and for starting your day on a cheerful note. Chef Sanjai loves making this with cilantro chutney (see [recipe](#)). You'll need to plan ahead and pre-soak the mung dal.

Mung Dal Pancakes

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- **1** cup mung dal
- **1** teaspoon freshly ground roasted cumin seeds
- **1/2** teaspoon turmeric
- Himalayan pink rock salt
- **3** tablespoons ghee

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Rinse the dal until the water is clear, then add to a medium bowl. Add enough water to cover the dal by 1 inch and soak overnight or at least 3 hours. Drain and rinse.
- 2.** Pour the mung dal into a blender and blend, adding as little water as possible, until the batter is the consistency of pancake batter. Add the cumin, turmeric, and salt, and blend again.
- 3.** Heat some ghee in a large skillet over medium heat. Cooking in batches, pour some batter into the pan and spread like you would to make pancakes. This much batter will be enough to make 4 to 5 large thick pancakes or 8 to 10 smaller ones.
- 4.** Cook until the edges start curling up and the underside is medium brown, about 5 minutes. Then flip and cook the other

side for 5 minutes longer. Continue adding more ghee and batter until you've finished cooking all of the batter.



Complement any savory meal with
cilantro chutney.



I love eating this zesty chutney with khichadi (see [recipe](#)) on Thursdays at Vedika Global in California, as part of our simple pre-class community meal. Cilantro chutney is a great condiment for

warming your emotional heart, boosting digestion, and alleviating thirst, nausea, and burning sensations (see [here](#) for more on cilantro's qualities).

Note: If you suffer from heat-related conditions, burning, or bleeding, skip the ginger and garlic and go light on the salt and lemon.

Cilantro Chutney

Makes $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

INGREDIENTS

- **1** bunch fresh cilantro
- **2–3** garlic cloves (optional)
- **1 $\frac{1}{2}$** -inch piece ginger, peeled and finely grated (optional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Himalayan pink rock salt
- **1** tablespoon sugar
- Juice from 1 lemon

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Thoroughly wash the cilantro and pat dry. Place in a blender and add the garlic and ginger, if using, salt, sugar, and lemon juice.
- 2.** Purée the mixture, slowly adding 1 to 2 teaspoons of water through the top, until it is a smooth consistency, 1 to 2 minutes. If the cilantro doesn't break down, periodically stop the blender and stir lightly.



Spice up your cooking with Ayurvedic fajitas.

Enjoy Mexican food with a healthy Ayurvedic twist! All of the ingredients and spices used to make Ayurvedic fajitas are excellent for your digestion. The unctuousness of avocados, paired with roasted cumin powder, cilantro, and other flavorful spices, makes the guacamole easy on your stomach. Using split mung dal, cooked with ghee and spices, also helps ensure that you can enjoy Mexican flavors gas-free. This recipe is a great way to introduce Ayurvedic cooking in a way that feels familiar, yet is new and exciting.

Ayurvedic Fajitas

Serves 4-5

INGREDIENTS

- **1** cup green split mung dal
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon turmeric powder
- Himalayan pink rock salt
- **1** avocado
- **1** tomato, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped onion (optional)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly roasted cumin powder
- Fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pomegranate seed powder, plus $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon (optional)
- **1** lemon, juiced (optional)
- **2 $\frac{1}{2}$** tablespoons ghee
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cumin seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ajwain seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fennel seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon mango powder
- **8-10** curry leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fenugreek seeds

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup roughly chopped onion
- **3–4** colored bell peppers (orange, red, green, yellow), roughly chopped
- **2** carrots, roughly chopped
- **1** yellow squash, roughly chopped
- **1** zucchini, roughly chopped
- Wheat tortillas

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Rinse the mung dal until the water is clear, then place in a medium bowl. Add enough water to cover the dal by 1 inch and soak for 2 to 3 hours, then drain and rinse.
- 2.** Place the mung dal, turmeric, salt to taste, and enough water to cover the dal by 1 inch in a soup pot. Cook until the mung dal looks like it is soft, 20 to 25 minutes. While the mung dal is cooking, prepare the vegetables.
- 3.** To make the guacamole, cut and scoop the avocado out of its skin into a medium bowl. Add the tomato, finely chopped onion, if using, cumin powder, and fresh cilantro to taste. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pomegranate powder, if using. Add rock salt and freshly squeezed lemon juice to taste. Set aside.
- 4.** Warm 1 tablespoon of the ghee in a small skillet. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of the cumin seeds, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of the ajwain seeds, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of the fennel seeds, and rock salt to taste. Cook until you can smell the seeds, about 10 to 15 seconds at most. Pour into the dal.

5. Warm the remaining ghee in a large skillet big enough to fit vegetables. Add the mango powder and the remaining turmeric, cumin, ajwain, and fennel seeds, as well as the curry leaves, fenugreek seeds, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pomegranate seed powder. Swirl and cook until fragrant, 10 to 15 seconds.
6. Add the roughly chopped onions to the spiced ghee mixture and sauté until they're pinkish, about 5 minutes.
7. Add the bell peppers, carrots, squash, and zucchini to the onions and cook, covered, until the veggies are soft enough that you can cut them with a spoon, 8 to 10 minutes.
8. Bring the vegetables to the table sizzling in the pan, and serve alongside the tortillas, mung dal, and homemade guacamole.



Warm your heart with butternut squash.

Butternut squash is by far my favorite vegetable. Its Sanskrit name, *kushmanda*, is synonymous with health, wealth, abundance, and heart, describing this vegetable's heartwarming and nourishing

qualities for your body, mind, and spirit. Serve with tortillas or rice and dal.

Heartwarming Butternut Squash

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- **1** teaspoon ghee
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cumin seeds
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon fennel seeds
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon fenugreek seeds (optional)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ajwain seeds (optional)
- **8–10** curry leaves
- **1** $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch piece ginger, peeled and grated
- **1** onion, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ medium sized butternut squash, peeled and diced into cubes (2 cups diced)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon turmeric powder
- Himalayan pink rock salt
- Fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)
- Pomegranate seeds (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Heat the ghee in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the cumin, fennel, and fenugreek and ajwain seeds, if using. Swirl and cook until fragrant, 10 to 15 seconds.

- 2.** Add the curry leaves and ginger, and cook for 5 seconds.
- 3.** Add the onion and cook for 3 to 4 minutes.
- 4.** Add the squash, turmeric, and rock salt to taste. Cook, stirring every 3 to 4 minutes to prevent sticking, until the butternut squash is soft enough to cut with a spoon, 15 to 20 minutes.
- 5.** Garnish with cilantro and pomegranate seeds, if using.



Make a mouthwatering masoor dal.

Masoor dal (a lentil with a unique hearty taste and texture) goes particularly well with butternut squash and white basmati rice. Whole masoor dal is brown and is preferred here, though you could also use the split red version (just reduce the cooking time to 20 minutes). This mix of dal and spices is Chef Sanjai's favorite combination. Masoor dal promotes easy digestion and is especially beneficial for any bleeding conditions or fever. You can also enjoy split masoor dal in a mung dal soup (see [recipe](#)).

Masoor Dal

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup whole masoor dal
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric powder
- Himalayan pink rock salt
- 1 teaspoon ghee
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin seeds
- Fresh cilantro, chopped, for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Rinse the masoor dal until the water is clear, then add to a small bowl. Add enough water to cover the dal by 1 inch and soak for at least 1 hour.
- 2.** Place the dal and soaking water, turmeric, and salt to taste into a pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer until the dal looks mushy, about 1 hour.
- 3.** Heat the ghee in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the cumin seeds, swirl, and cook until fragrant, 10 to 15 seconds.
- 4.** Add the cooked ghee to the cooked dal. Garnish with cilantro, if using.



Give your pasta an Ayurvedic twist.



Here's another fun twist on a familiar food. Ayurvedic pasta is easy and quick, and it tastes deliciously fresh and flavorful. Something about ghee mixed with tomatoes and Ayurvedic spices is magical. It tastes so much fresher and is much more sattvic (stress-relieving and enhancing peace of mind; see [Sattva](#)) than store-bought pasta sauce.

Cooking the pasta and sauce ingredients with ghee — as opposed to olive oil, which is more drying and can lead to constipation in those who are prone to it — helps with digestion. To make the roasted cumin powder, blend roasted cumin seeds in a spice blender or grind with a mortar and pestle.

Ayurvedic Pasta

Serves 2-3

INGREDIENTS

- **9** ounces organic whole wheat pasta noodles
- **2** tablespoons ghee
- **1/2** teaspoon roasted cumin powder
- **1/2** teaspoon ajwain seeds
- **1/2** teaspoon fennel seeds
- **1/2** teaspoon turmeric powder
- **1/2** teaspoon mango powder
- **1/2** teaspoon pomegranate powder
- **10–12** curry leaves
- **1/4** teaspoon freshly ground black pepper (optional)
- **1 1/2** -inch piece ginger, peeled and grated (optional)
- **1–3** garlic cloves, finely chopped (optional)
- **1** onion, roughly chopped
- **10** asparagus stalks, roughly chopped
- **1–2** yellow squash, roughly chopped (optional)
- **2** carrots, roughly chopped (optional)
- **1–2** zucchini, roughly chopped (optional)
- **2–3** tomatoes, chopped

- Fresh cilantro, chopped, for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Bring a large pot of water to boil and cook pasta according to package instructions.
- 2.** Heat the ghee in large skillet. Add the cumin powder, ajwain seeds, fennel seeds, turmeric powder, mango powder, pomegranate powder, curry leaves, and black pepper, ginger, and garlic, if using. Cook until fragrant, 10 to 15 seconds.
- 3.** Add the onion and sauté until pinkish, about 5 minutes.
- 4.** Add the asparagus and the yellow squash, carrots, and zucchini, if using. Cook until you can easily cut into the vegetables with a spoon, 10 to 15 minutes.
- 5.** Add the tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes.
- 6.** Add the cooked noodles to the skillet and mix with the veggies and spices. Garnish with cilantro, if using.



CHAPTER 3

Beauty, Naturally

Ayurveda is the first system of medicine to promote, and even celebrate, the pursuit of physical beauty as essential to one's wellbeing. Making an effort to activate your physical beauty isn't considered vanity in Ayurveda. Instead, as my teacher says, it's a matter of "treating your indwelling spiritual being like royalty."



Just as I experienced resistance to reclaiming my health through food, I also held reservations about reclaiming my right to physical beauty. After all, I would think, why should *I* have beautiful skin and hair? Deep down, I felt I didn't deserve the pleasure of being beautiful.

However, Ayurveda taught me that we all have a light within: everyone can be radiantly beautiful, once you learn how. The Ayurvedic practices outlined in this chapter taught me how to free my inner light, and now I'm excited to pass them on to you. As you put these all-natural, time-tested beauty practices into action, observe how inner radiance lights up your face, your skin, and your whole life. Get ready to say goodbye to years of purchasing pricey lotions, potions, and creams, and prepare to make your own kitchen the source of your most cherished beauty products.



Say goodbye to foods stripping you of beauty.

Did you know your food may be causing your skin to lose its natural glow? While chocolate, coffee, processed sugar, and fried foods are well-known culprits of poor, blemished skin, Ayurveda outlines an even longer list of foods that can cause poor complexion, dryness, breakouts, wrinkles, and more.

In Ayurveda, the five great elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) combine in different ways to form seven bodily tissues. The two bodily tissues essential for healthy skin are your nutritive and blood tissues. To look your best, Ayurveda recommends avoiding

foods that disturb these tissues (in addition to following the basic food guidelines outlined in [chapter 1](#)). Because your nutritive and blood tissues are made primarily out of the fire and water elements, you want to avoid foods that contain large amounts of these two elements. Whereas you're able to digest food that contains the right amount of spice, salt, and sourness, too much aggravates the fire element already in your body. Excess fire in your body can cause early aging in the form of wrinkles, hair loss, and graying hair. Likewise, excessively oily and heavy foods aggravate the water element. And fermented and incompatible foods are aggravating for reasons explained [here](#).

Avoid snacking and eating excessively at any time, as both these habits destroy your digestive fire. If you're struggling with skin-related issues and still want to snack, see [Snack wisely](#) for mindful snacking options that promote healthy digestion.

Types of Foods to Avoid

- **Very spicy or intense foods:** Wasabi, alcohol, red and green chilies, paprika, cayenne powder, red chili powder, horseradish, excessive black pepper, caffeine, jalapeños, Sriracha sauce
- **Very oily foods:** Cheese, yogurt, excess ghee or other cooking oil, pork, beef, fish, fried foods, a lot of Indian food in restaurants
- **Fermented foods:** Cheese, yogurt, idli, dosas, kombucha, bread, beer, sauerkraut, fish sauce, kimchi, sour cream, soured milk, soy sauce, Tabasco sauce, tempeh, kefir
- **Overly heavy foods:** Beef, nuts in excess, pastries, cheesy pasta dishes, thick-crust pizza, yogurt, pork, lamb, mutton, veal

- **Non-fresh foods:** Canned foods, frozen foods, processed foods, leftover foods (more than one day), stale foods
- **Excessively sour foods:** Canned pickles, yogurt, kefir, excess lemon, sauerkraut
- **Very salty foods:** Chips, canned vegetables, instant noodles, packaged mixed nuts, store-bought pasta sauces, French fries, bottled salad dressing, lunch meats, fast-food hamburgers
- **Incompatible foods:** Milk and salt, milk and meat, milk and vegetables, fruits and vegetables, milk and fruits, yogurt and fruit (for full list, see [here](#))



QUANTITY COUNTS

A small quantity of any of the foods listed [here](#) should not harm a relatively healthy person. However, eating too much of any of these will harm you, and that damage will be reflected in your skin.

Fermented foods are both heating and sour, so those with a lot of heat in their body should avoid them entirely. For optimal beauty protection, everyone should also avoid eating fermented foods in hot weather.



Start eating your way to greater beauty.

You want the right kind and amount of moisture in your diet to lubricate your food and allow your skin to shine and glow. When you digest natural oils from skin-friendly food items, you'll be blessed with healthy, supple skin, which stays youthful longer.

For optimal skin health and acne prevention, strive to eat lighter foods that are easier to digest. This includes lighter meats, such as goat's meat instead of beef, and cooked vegetables in place of raw. Cooking your food automatically lightens it and ensures your stomach has to do less work to digest the food in your body. It's as if the stove predigests the food for you — and your skin likes that. A lot.

The sweet and bitter tastes are particularly good for promoting healthy nutritive and blood tissues, which ensure healthy skin and hair. When we talk about sweet here, we mean naturally sweet foods: sweet fruits, vegetables, dairy items, spices, and grains.



HEALTHY SKIN STARTS IN THE WOMB

Ayurveda recommends that pregnant women eat certain kinds of naturally oily foods including milk, ghee, butter, saffron, cardamom, and fresh fruits to ensure babies have good-quality, healthy skin from the start. Other natural sources of moisture can come from food such as zucchini, squashes, and raisins.

Foods to Eat for Healthy Skin and Hair

- **Grains:** White rice, wheat, barley, oats
- **Vegetables:** White onions, spinach, bitter melon, okra, carrots, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, zucchini, beets, snake melon, cucumbers, green beans, sweet fresh corn, cauliflower
- **Fruits:** Pomegranates, grapes, raisins, *amalaki* (Indian gooseberries), coconut, dates, sweet oranges, mangoes, plums (raisins and dates are particularly beneficial in promoting healthy hair)
- **Dairy:** Ghee, warm spiced milk, sweet rose lassi, mango lassi (see lassi recipes)
- **Spices:** Nutmeg, saffron, ginger, turmeric, cumin seeds, cardamom, Himalayan pink rock salt, cilantro leaves, coriander seeds and powder, mango powder, curry leaves, mint
- **Meat:** Goat meat, baked chicken
- **Beans:** Toor dal (red gram), masoor dal, mung dal (green gram), chana (chickpeas), yellow mung dal

- **Nuts:** Almonds (soaked)



Avoid overheating.

Ayurveda believes heat greatly aggravates the blood tissue in your body, increasing the fire element within you to the point where you can develop rashes, boils, and other undesirable skin conditions, as well as early graying and hair loss. Ayurveda, therefore, recommends keeping your cool — in all ways.

Stop sunbathing. This should come as no surprise. Ayurveda is about addressing the root causes of why certain health conditions manifest in the first place. No matter how much sunscreen you liberally apply to your face and body, excessive sun exposure damages your skin and hair. It's thus essential to protect yourself with a hat and sunglasses when you go outside.

In situations where you have no choice but to face the sun, rub coconut oil onto your face beforehand to protect your skin (coconut oil is preferable to normal sunscreen because it's chemical-free).

Keep your head cool. Take this advice both literally and figuratively. Physically, Ayurveda tells us we should wash our hair

and face with cool water (warm water works well for the rest of the body). Because the mind and body are so interconnected, we must also keep our minds cool, calm, and collected, which is the subject of the second part of this book.

Unplug your hair dryer, curling iron, and straightening iron. Frequent and excessive use of hair dryers and irons overheats your hair roots. This type of heat can cause dryness in your hair, which can translate to early graying and even premature balding.

Follow seasonal sex, exercise, and travel guidelines. Sex, exercise, and travel are considered forms of exertion, and exertion creates heat in your body. When excess exertion naturally leads to exhaustion, your immunity suffers as a result, your nutritive and blood tissue quality lowers, and you develop poor-quality skin and hair. Hence, Ayurveda has seasonal guidelines (see [chapter 9](#)) for how much to engage in each of these activities so as to avoid overheating.



**Make your own soap and
body scrub.**



Ayurveda is all about returning to nature, so we strive to use products that are free of harsh, drying chemicals found in some common commercial products. Try grinding green mung dal in a

blender to a flour consistency, and use this as a soap substitute to scrub your body while showering. My skin used to be very dry, but it has become considerably smoother from using a green mung dal flour, turmeric, saffron, and masoor dal soap substitute.

To make your own body scrub, combine green or red mung dal, chickpea flour, wheat flour, and/or oatmeal in a blender or food processor and process until it has a fine consistency. You can use just one of these ingredients, or any combination of them that you like. You can also add essential oils of your choice for a pleasant smell, turmeric powder for general beauty enhancement and blood purification, neem powder for cleansing, and freshly ground rose petals for their beautiful scent and cooling and refreshing quality. This mix will store well for 1 to 2 months.

To use your body scrub, mix a small scoop of the powder in a small bowl with enough water to create a pudding-like paste. Apply this paste to your whole body, making light, circular motions, and then rinse the scrub off with warm or cool water. Enjoy!



GREEN MUNG DAL FOR BEAUTY

You can also clean and massage your scalp with green mung dal flour, then use a little shampoo afterward if needed. Many Indian and natural food stores sell organic pre-powdered green mung dal.



Wash your hair less often and more wisely.

Daily or frequent shampooing dries your hair follicles and can hasten the speed at which your hair starts graying, falling out, and otherwise losing its luster. Washing your hair once every 7 to 10 days is ideal.

You can also try one of the following DIY shampoo powders (see [Resources](#) for where to order the herbs mentioned below).



GOOD DIGESTION FOR HEALTHY SKIN

Poor digestion affects more than just your stomach. As your body's largest organ, your skin is more vulnerable to disease, injury, infection, and imbalance than any other bodily structure. When you don't digest your food, it affects the quality of your skin. This is partly why Ayurveda places so much emphasis on avoiding indigestion. I once had an eight-year-old client who

suffered from lots of skin rashes and food allergies. As soon as he adopted the digestion-friendly Ayurvedic diet I prescribe in this book, his skin immediately began clearing up. He was even able to continue eating the very foods that his doctors told him he was allergic to. I've had similar experiences working with those suffering from a variety of other skin issues, ranging from acne to dry skin.

All-Purpose Shampoos

- Mix equal amounts of the Ayurvedic herbs **shikakai**, **ritha**, **amalaki**, and **triphala** in a small bowl with enough water to make a runny paste. Apply to your scalp for 10 to 15 minutes and then wash out.
- Mix equal amounts of the Ayurvedic herbs **shikakai**, **amalaki**, **brahmi**, **bhringraj**, and **hibiscus** in a small bowl with enough water to make a runny paste. Apply to your scalp for 10 to 15 minutes and then wash out. Because it includes brahmi (an excellent Ayurvedic herb for promoting mental calmness), this shampoo not only benefits your scalp but also helps calm your nerves and reduces stress, factors that lead to hair problems.

Dandruff Shampoos

- Wash your hair with **neem powder** mixed with water.
- Soak 2 tablespoons of **fenugreek seeds** overnight. The next day, grind the seeds and mix with water to make them into a paste.

Apply to your scalp and let sit for 20 minutes before washing off.

- Grind **organic orange peels** into powder and mix with water to form a paste. Apply to your scalp and let sit for 20 minutes before washing off.

In my mid-twenties, I started to lose copious amounts of hair from my head. It was startling. I turned to Ayurveda for solutions and found great relief with the practices I share here.



Oil your hair.



In India, it is common for mothers to put oil into their daughters' hair every day before braiding it to make the hair look thicker and shinier. My Ayurveda teacher and my mother both reminisce about

how their mothers used to do this for them. While I didn't grow up with this tradition, I now love doing it at least once a week. This self-love practice strengthens my hair and makes it shine with health.

You can use simple organic sesame oil for your hair during winter and coconut oil for hotter days. If you're experiencing hair loss, massage these oils into your scalp daily. Otherwise, oil your hair the night before washing it. Really rub the oil into your scalp, like you would shampoo, to promote sound sleep. You can place a towel over your pillow to protect it from the oil.

Oiling your hair enhances blood circulation and can even help drive stress away, particularly if you mix hibiscus or the Ayurvedic herbs amalaki, bhringaraj, or brahmi into the oil. Avoid oiling your hair in the spring if you have nasal or lung congestion.

Other hair care tips: *Rub cow's milk onto your scalp before washing your hair if you're experiencing hair loss and graying. You can also use milk to wash your hair. To prevent premature graying, rub coconut milk into your hair and wash with water.*



Make an all-natural anti-acne and anti-aging facemask.



As someone who tried every product out there to combat acne-prone skin prior to encountering Ayurveda, I'm delighted to share one of my favorite Ayurvedic skincare recipes. It's made from wonderful ingredients that are just as good for you when applied to your skin as they are when cooked and eaten. This is a great skincare treatment if you're looking to prevent acne and keep your skin looking and feeling youthful and fresh.

All four ingredients in this DIY facemask (masoor dal, sandalwood powder, turmeric, and saffron) are stars in promoting healthy skin. The time I spend making and applying my facemask is a special self-care home spa time — and is much less expensive than going to a professional spa! I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

Sandalwood powder. This pleasantly scented powder is cooling and soothing, making it a go-to herb for bleeding and burning conditions in the body. Blood-purifying, antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, and intellect-promoting, sandalwood is also believed to promote happiness (*ahladana* in Sanskrit). No wonder it's one of the most popular Ayurvedic beauty herbs.

Turmeric. Turmeric improves the complexion, tone, and texture of your skin. It's also an antiallergenic, antimicrobial, antioxidant herb that builds immunity, especially when consumed internally as part of many healing Ayurvedic recipes. Turmeric, like sandalwood, is a terrific blood purifier. Turmeric's beautifying quality is so famous among Indians that brides dedicate an entire ritual to applying turmeric-based skincare recipes onto their skin the day before their wedding. You can learn more about turmeric's all-star qualities [here](#).

Saffron. A wonderful rejuvenating herb, saffron helps heal headaches when applied externally with ghee and consumed

internally in warm milk. It's used in a great variety of cosmetics.

Masoor dal (optional). This is a superstar reddish-orange lentil that you can buy at any Indian store and many natural food stores. It's highly beneficial for fevers when cooked and consumed as food (see [recipe](#)), and Ayurveda believes it's also a great blood purifier when used internally and externally.

Anti-Acne and Anti-Aging Facemask

Makes enough for 20 to 30 facemasks (depending on how much you apply to your face each time).

Ideally, you should apply this mask in the morning, on an empty stomach. You can use it daily if you wish, but note that turmeric may leave a slight yellow stain on the skin; the stain will fade in a day.

INGREDIENTS

- **1** cup masoor dal
- **2** teaspoons turmeric powder
- **10–20** strands saffron
- **1** teaspoon sandalwood powder

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Place the masoor dal, turmeric, saffron, and sandalwood powder in a blender. Blend until the mixture becomes a fine powder, 1 to 3 minutes.
- 2.** Place a spoonful of the powder in a small bowl and mix it with a bit of water to create a paste. Spread the paste onto your face and keep it there for 10 to 15 minutes, or until it dries up and tightens your facial muscles (see [Make Sure to Relax](#) for what to do while the mask does its work).
- 3.** Rinse the facemask off with cool water, ideally in the shower.



Embrace the healing power of
marigold flowers.



Marigolds (*Tagetes erecta*) are highly regarded in Ayurveda for their many healing properties. As with many things in the Ayurveda tradition, there's both a spiritual and a practical component to their healing potential.

Marigolds are the color of the sun, and because the sun is considered a symbol of the bright, shining spirit within you, marigolds are the color of spirituality in India. They represent inner spiritual fire. People often make beautiful marigold garlands

and give them to important people in their lives to honor their spiritual dimension. This is the most popular flower featured at traditional Indian weddings.

The marigold flower is also synonymous with beauty and has fantastic benefits for any type of skin. For oily skin, it helps check excess sebum, which causes oiliness. For dry skin, it soothes and prevents further dryness. For combination skin, it naturally moisturizes and helps keep wrinkles at bay. I can't help but smile while wearing a facemask made from fresh marigold petals.

Marigold Facemask

The ingredients vary based on skin type, but the basic procedure for making and applying the mask is the same. Marigolds (on previous page) are in season in summer and fall and can be found at many local nurseries. To crush the petals, simply rip them with your hands. For each recipe, start with the recommended amount of flour, but if the mask is dripping off your face, add a little more flour to thicken it.

INGREDIENTS FOR OILY SKIN

- **10–12** crushed marigold petals
- **1/2** teaspoon dry amalaki (Indian gooseberry) powder
- **1/4** teaspoon lemon juice
- **1/2** teaspoon plain yogurt
- **1/2** teaspoon chickpea flour

INGREDIENTS FOR DRY SKIN

- **10–15** crushed marigold petals
- **4** teaspoons organic honey (from the farmers' market or local bee clubs)
- **1** teaspoon cream
- **1/2** teaspoon gram flour

INGREDIENTS FOR COMBINATION SKIN

- **10–12** crushed marigold petals
- 1/2 teaspoon plain yogurt
- 1/2 teaspoon red sandalwood powder
- 1/2 teaspoon chickpea flour

DIRECTIONS

- 1.** Combine the facemask ingredients in a small bowl. Mix, then apply to your skin.
- 2.** Sit calmly for 10 minutes while meditating or listening to relaxing music.
- 3.** Rinse off the mask with cool water.

Try this: *Sit with your fingers in a special yogic mudra (hand gesture) that promotes relaxation, wellbeing, and spiritual receptivity.*



MAKE SURE TO RELAX!

While the mask hardens on your face, the ancient Ayurvedic text *Charaka Samhita* advises you to relax. Focus on your breathing, mentally repeat a mantra, or focus on the sound of OM. Your skin is considered a mirror of your mind, so you want to move your thoughts in a positive direction to bring out a glow that truly comes from the inside.

PART 2

Strengthening Your Mind





CHAPTER 4

The Art of Mindful Eating

Ayurveda teaches that how you eat can be as powerful and transformational as the kinds of foods you consume. This chapter outlines methods that Ayurvedic sages have recommended to develop a more mindful relationship with your food and eating, as prerequisites to deeper spiritual knowledge — not to mention a more satisfying, fulfilling life.



In my life before Ayurveda, I treated my body like a trash can. I ate junk food while driving, walking, talking, or working on the computer. I never paid attention to what, where, or when I ate. When I lived in New York City, I would just grab anything I could find and eat it on the go, to save time. I never really tasted my food. Eating was just a routine thing I did to function.

Through Ayurveda, I've transformed my experience of eating into a dedicated spiritual practice. Seeing and honoring my body as the home of a higher being has been the key to overcoming years of eating disorders. Giving myself what my teacher calls "a royal experience of eating" has been profoundly healing. In the act of eating I can now connect to a higher power in myself, in the food I eat, in the person(s) who grew the food, in the one(s) who cooked it, and in the actual act of eating. It makes me profoundly aware of the interconnectedness, union, or *yoga*, of myself with the earth and all living beings. After all, as writer Anne Lamott astutely and comically shared, "It's hard to remember you are a cherished spiritual being when you're burping up apple fritters and Cheetos."

In the traditional yoga I practice and teach from Acharya Shunya's lineage, a main way I've learned to work on healing the mind is by setting a mindful intention, called a *sankalpa*. The nature of the mind is to be unstable and constantly moving from thought to thought. Setting a sankalpa helps strengthen and stabilize the mind, which supports healing. The process of setting a sankalpa transforms the physical experience of yoga poses (or *asanas*) from mechanical to profoundly spiritual. The same applies for the way you eat. As you read the mindful-eating practices, set a sankalpa to embody the practices in your life, to honor your body as a respected vessel of your indwelling spirit.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“I learned that food can be nourishing on a spiritual plane as well as a physical plane when consumed with conscience, focus, and above all, slowly. . . . The taste of the food was enhanced significantly and the experience of eating was much more focused than ever before. This opened up my mind to another way of relating to food and the full scope of nourishment.”

— Peter



Consciously chew your food.

It's amazing what a world of difference the super-simple action of really chewing your food can make in the eating experience. We tend to devour our food when we're hungry, not even noticing what it tastes like. Or we're too busy doing other things while we eat, like working on the computer or watching television, to really notice our food. But when we slow down and chew each bite of food up to 30 times, we really taste each nuance of what we're eating — every flavor, every texture, how fresh it is.

Your mind and body are deeply interconnected. Slowing down, really chewing and tasting your food, greatly augments the digestion process, which positively impacts your body and your mind in myriad ways.

Try chewing each bite 30 times during your next meal. Even if you're unable to chew that many times, the act of slowing down while eating will definitely make you feel much calmer and more connected. Not to mention that you'll enjoy your food a lot more!



Start your meals with a moment of
gratitude.



Scientists at places like Harvard, UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center, and the Duke University Medical School are starting to recognize the value of gratitude for improving your

physical and mental health. The Vedic sages who discovered Ayurveda always knew that gratitude is a key practice for health at all levels. To put our feelings of profound appreciation and connection into meaningful words, they have given us beautiful universal mantras to recite before eating.

The following mantra comes from the ancient yogic text *Bhagavad Gita*, which is the main text of yoga philosophy. It acknowledges consciousness in the food you eat, in the process of preparing and offering food to yourself and others, and in the digestive fire (*agni*) to which you offer your food.

It goes:

The whole creation comes from Cosmic Consciousness itself;

the food, too, is consciousness;

the process of offering it is consciousness;

it is being offered in the fire of consciousness;

He who thus sees consciousness in action, reaches pure consciousness alone.

I love reciting this particular mantra prior to eating. You can, however, recite any words that feel potent to you and connect you with your food and the many living beings who played a part in bringing you the food you are about to eat. Now, that's food for thought.



Sit in Thunderbolt Pose
after meals.



Thunderbolt Pose (Vajrasana; *vajra* means “thunderbolt” and *asana* means “pose”) is the only yogic posture Ayurveda recommends practicing immediately after meals. It’s a very powerful pose for digestion and building mental power. As my teacher revealed, Thunderbolt Pose “connects your highest consciousness with the best of your physical manifestation.” By regularly practicing this pose, you’ll experience tremendous resolution, self-acceptance, and incredible digestion.

To do the pose, sit on your knees with your spine straight. Your hips should be resting on your heels and toes, which will ideally touch each other. Don’t ever force yourself to sit in this pose (or any other yoga position) if it’s uncomfortable in any way. Honor your body. Even if you can’t sit like this, you can sit straight, close your eyes, and simply imagine yourself sitting in Thunderbolt Pose. This will be just as beneficial, as it’s the mental intention to connect with your inner power that really matters.

Close your eyes or keep them only slightly open. Visualize a thunderbolt running through your entire spine, from its base to the top of your head. It’s full of light and looks like hard, frozen, condensed diamonds, lustrous and brimming with power, vitality, immunity, and radiant health. Imagine your food becoming beautifully digested into this diamond-filled nourishment that will, in turn, gift you strength, clarity, and energy. Believe in your power and potential. Sit this way for 3 to 5 minutes. You can set a timer in the beginning if you are at work or school, or anywhere else you have only a set period of time to eat.



THUNDERBOLT POSE FOR DIGESTIVE HEALTH

Practicing Thunderbolt Pose after meals supports your digestive system and particularly benefits these digestive disturbances:

- Hyperacidity
- Indigestion
- Constipation
- Weak digestion
- Gas/bloating
- Ulcers



Eat in silence when possible.

It's easier to focus on chewing and tasting your food when you eat silently. To help my students practice this, I give them each a handful of raisins and ask them to first eat the raisins while they are talking to the person next to them. When I ask how the raisins tasted, students often say they are good or they aren't sure because they were more engaged in talking. Then I ask them to close their eyes as they eat the raisins in silence. I inspire them to feel gratitude for the entire chain of people who brought these few raisins to them. When I ask how the raisins taste, they're inevitably surprised by how much more they notice about the raisins. They feel the bursts of sweet flavor, the satisfying taste, and the intricate texture of the raisins.

In silence and with mindfulness, you're able to receive the gifts your food offers. Silence is the language of the soul. It connects you to your indwelling spirit, bringing great calm and mental peace. Eating in silence, as much as possible, is all it takes to start developing more mental strength and equanimity. And who doesn't want that?

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“When I eat consciously, I feel I am satisfying my heart and my belly and feeding my soul. I feel my food gives me more strength when I do this. It really changes my relationship with food.”

— Smita



Consume the right amount of food and liquids.

How do you know when you've eaten and drunk enough? The Ayurvedic sage Rishi Charaka outlined the following signals of optimal food and liquid intake:

- You feel relief from hunger and thirst.
- You don't have a heavy feeling in your heart or stomach.
- Your five senses all work well.
- You feel comfortable standing, sitting, speaking, moving, breathing, and laughing.
- You don't feel pressure in the sides of your chest.

Eat until you reach the point when you're not hungry but you could eat a little more. It's important to recognize and listen for this moment so that you can really honor your body.

The Ayurvedic sages recommend this formula for determining the optimal level of food consumption: $\frac{1}{2}$ food + $\frac{1}{4}$ water or liquid, and leave $\frac{1}{4}$ free, empty space.



Eat more fresh sattvic foods and
less rajasic and tamasic foods.



Ayurveda teaches that food leads to feelings of inertia (*tamas*), agitation (*rajas*), or balance (*sattva*). Together, these three qualities form the basis of Ayurvedic psychology. We need all these qualities

to be in a balanced state for optimal health and wellbeing. (See [here](#) for more information.)

You need some *tamas* to rest and particularly to sleep well at night, but having too much can make you feel incredibly lethargic, heavy, dark, and depressed. If you have excess inertia, you can be easily drawn toward foods that contain this quality. Inertia-inducing foods include leftovers, processed foods (including all canned and frozen foods), cheese, mushrooms, beef, and pork.

We need some *rajas* to get up, get moving, and get things done, but too much can give way to heated emotions like anger, jealousy, and aggression. *Rajas*-building foods are very spicy, excessively salty, and overly sweet. They include tortilla chips, energy drinks, green and red chilies, candy bars, and wasabi. While the right amount of ginger, garlic, black pepper, and other heating spices in your food makes your food more digestible, having too much of these spices increases *rajas* in your body and mind.

Sattva, which is another word for the mind, comes from the root word *sat*, meaning “truth.” Ayurveda proclaims that you are, by nature, filled with balance, clarity, inner peace, strength, and harmony — all synonymous with *sattva*. *Sattvic* foods are fresh, light, easy to digest, and brimming with the yogic concept of life force (*prana*). Cooked vegetables, ghee, cardamom, nuts, ripe fruits, cow’s milk from well-treated cows, and raisins are all *sattvic* foods. All of the recipes included in [chapter 1](#) are *sattvic*.

Eating *sattvic* foods is an amazing way to tap into a feeling of inner freedom, and to start living and giving from an inner space of fullness, which ensures that you aren’t depleted. Committing to a more *sattvic* diet is an important, tangible way to move in the direction of greater mental and physical health. Eat fewer *rajasic* and *tamasic* foods and have more *sattvic* foods, and you, too, can become as healthy, full, and free as you were meant to be.

When I started eating more sattvic food, my mind began to feel calmer, clearer, and more peaceful. Eating sattvic foods was the first step toward creating a happier relationship with myself, and thereby finding greater harmony in all my other relationships.



Snack wisely.

For optimal digestion, avoid snacking. In general, Ayurveda believes it's best to wait until your previously eaten food has completely digested before eating more food. Your digestive fire needs to focus on one meal at a time. When you overload this fire with new food before you've finished digesting your previous meal, the mix of new and previously undigested food forms a toxic buildup in your body, leading to all sorts of digestive disturbances.

There are, however, some snack options that promote healthy elimination and are fine to eat if you get very hungry between meals.

- **Raisins.** These are a great snack to have anytime. Black raisins in particular are sweet and have a special mild laxative quality,

making them good for anyone suffering from constipation. Eat them just before going to bed for a good bowel movement the next morning.

- **Seasonal fruits.** See [chapter 9](#) for a list of seasonal fruits. To strengthen your digestion, cook fruits with spices like cinnamon, cardamom, and even black pepper and cumin powder (depending on the season and your state of digestion).
- **Takra or spiced milk.** These are delicious snack options in between meals (see [chapter 1](#) for recipes). When drinking spiced milk, make sure to leave enough time before and after your other meals (ideally 2 hours) for proper digestion.
- **Honey.** When consumed by itself on a regular basis, honey (aged for at least 1 year) has unique immunity-boosting and toxin-cleansing qualities. It's great for anyone combating colds, coughs, itching, and water retention and is highly recommended in spring. Take up to 4 teaspoons per day in winter and spring and up to 1 teaspoon per day during summer and fall.



Walk 100 steps after meals.



After sitting still for a few minutes following your meal, Ayurveda recommends walking 100 steps. The act of walking just 100 steps (which isn't a lot and only takes 5 minutes) at a moderate pace

helps ignite your digestive fire to most optimally convert your food into nourishment.

Cultivating the habit of walking after meals will work wonders to counteract the heavy, sleepy feeling that often follows eating. It's especially beneficial after eating late at night, or if you've had a particularly heavy meal, as both of these circumstances make digestion more difficult.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“Quickly after my daughter was born, I started putting myself last. I started doing Ayurveda practices to invest in myself and make myself a priority. I began sitting down when I ate and really enjoying what was in front of me. Today, I practice living like I'm worth it. Because I am.”

— Isabelle



Make lunch your largest meal.

Breakfast is often touted as the most important meal of the day. However, according to Ayurveda, you should eat a lighter breakfast and dinner and consume the majority of your food during lunchtime. (I'll go into Ayurveda's prescribed daily routine in detail in [chapter 8](#).)

Why is this? Ayurveda practices follow a natural, circadian rhythm. We're solar-powered creatures, so we must follow the sun's course throughout the day to feel abidingly healthy and balanced. The sun is at its peak from 12 to 1 p.m., and so is your digestive fire. This makes lunchtime the best time to enjoy a large meal, which your body has the rest of the day to digest.

It can be tempting to eat a heavy dinner in the evening after a long, hard day at work, or after a tiring trip, and you may do this unconsciously at times. You may even find that you sleep more easily after you're satisfied with a big meal at the end of the day. But when you eat a large or heavy meal late at night, your digestive fire has to work extra hard to digest your food. Instead of becoming nourishment that your body can use, large dinners end up becoming a big liability to your body.

Eating a light dinner has greatly improved my digestion, and that of my clients. Try it and you, too, will see how much more clearheaded you feel — and how much easier it is to wake up in the morning.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“I'm one of those people who had to eat every two or three hours. I now make lunch the biggest

meal of my day, and I'm not really very hungry for dinner anymore. I eat a small meal for dinner and that's it."

— Olga



Let your mind calm down from strong emotions before eating.

Your mental and emotional state plays a crucial role in how well you digest your food. In the Ayurvedic texts, fear, anger, grief, excessive thinking, obsessive worrying, and greed are causative factors for indigestion, tastelessness, diarrhea, and even fevers. And how well you digest your food, in turn, plays a big role in how mentally calm, poised, and balanced you feel. Hence, it's important to avoid eating when you're under the influence of strong emotions.

This doesn't mean that you need to fast when you're grieving the loss of a relative or friend. It means that you shouldn't try to eat

while you are crying (or having an overwhelming urge to cry), are feeling extremely angry, or are frozen by fear of something or someone. Allow your emotions to wash over you first. If you feel like crying, don't suppress it — release your tears with the knowledge that this, too, shall pass. Once you've allowed room for expression of your emotions, you can proceed to eat.

Emotions are like food; if they aren't properly digested, they can harm your mind and body. That's why it's so important to learn positive strategies, explored in the next chapters, for strengthening your mind and balancing your emotions.



Eat in a pleasant environment.



The ancient Ayurvedic texts teach us that our environment greatly affects our mind, which, in turn, affects our digestion and health. Hence, it's a good idea to eat in pleasant physical surroundings and

to avoid eating in unsanitary places, or ones that cause stress, like, perhaps, our office desks.

As often as possible, eat in a place that inspires you. A natural, clean outdoor setting is ideal since it cultivates your connection with nature and you will benefit from nature's abundant blessings. If you're unable to eat outdoors, find a clean, beautiful space indoors to dine. Try adding flowers to your eating area. Buy or make your own placemats that make you feel excited to eat. Even the cutlery we dine with counts! The small things matter, especially when they ignite your enthusiasm to eat, which, in turn, ignites your digestive fire, benefiting your overall health.

Pay attention to the details in your surroundings. Is there a lot of clutter in the area where you eat? Be sure to remove all reminders of your busy life before eating. Make your meal place one of joy and inspiration. You will thereby become joyful, inspired, and able to attract the abundance that accompanies health.



CHAPTER 5

Change Your Mind, Change Your Life

The Vedic sages discovered three qualities (gunas) from their astute observations of the natural world around and within each of us: inertia (tamas), agitation (rajas), and balance (sattva). Once you're able to see these characteristics within yourself, you will find them in one another and the world around you.



Tamas, or inertia, is necessary for sleep and rest, but when we have too much of this quality, we can develop the triple *Ds* we don't want: darkness, denial, and depression. On those mornings when

you just don't feel like moving or getting out of bed, that's excess tamas at work. Too much tamas is like a thick fog that covers the world with a heavy layer of negativity. In nature, it is a cloudy day by a muddy lake, in which everything looks dark, dismal, and fully polluted.

When you have too much of this quality present, you feel confused about what to do, where to go, and how to be who you really are. You unconsciously create mental traps and subsequent suffering for yourself. Because it rules the realm of the unconscious mind, when imbalanced, **tamas** is the force responsible for addictions and criminal activities.

Rajas is associated with action, passion, and motion; it's the exact opposite of **tamas**. Whenever you have too much inactivity and inertia in your life, you need the force of **rajas** to allow you to wake up, get moving, and achieve your aims.

But too much rajas creates excessive movement of thoughts, which can manifest as anxiety, a sharp tongue, and eating too many overly pungent foods that can burn your body. It inspires hatred, lying, cheating, judgmental attitudes, restlessness, and discontent. People with a lot of rajas are like steamrollers, rolling relentlessly over any obstacle in their way. Rajas in nature looks like a turbulent lake, with lots of fast-moving waves, wind, and loud noises. It's not that fun to be there because there's too much excitement and commotion. You return from this lake feeling tired.

Rajas can drive you to the point of physical and mental exhaustion, leading to inactivity. This is how rajas and tamas are connected.

Sattva is a balance of healthy rajas and healthy tamas (take the Mind Quiz to see which quality you possess the most of). We are all searching, consciously or unconsciously, for sattva. This quality is connected with clarity, compassion, balance, purity, health, happiness, harmony, and universal love.

Sattva is also another word for the mind in Sanskrit. The spiritual philosophy of yoga and Ayurveda teaches that the nature of even the darkest criminal is sattva — creative, compassionate, and clear. A manifestation of sattva in the natural world is a lake on a picturesque day, when the sun is shining, waves are calm, and everything is so clear that you can see your own reflection in the water. Isn't it reassuring to know that the true nature of your mind is this beautiful?

Chronic insomnia and many modern diseases stem from stress and negative thinking. The visionary Vedic sages understood how you have to change your behaviors before you can transform your underlying negative mental and emotional states into positive ones. Just as milk, ghee, turmeric, and other Ayurvedic foods and herbs are physically rejuvenating, your behavior can become a source of mental rejuvenation and transformation. In other words, sattva is something you can cultivate through positive life choices to proactively write your own life script.



Keep good company.

The company you keep is one of the most important contributing factors to your mental health. It's hard to imagine choosing health-promoting habits when constantly surrounded by those addicted to substances, whether they be drugs, alcohol, or even hamburgers or frozen yogurt (my own former favorite substance!). I felt supported in making changes in my life due to all the community support I received — and continue to receive — while studying at Vedika Global. I also love teaching group Ayurveda trainings because they foster a sense of support and community, which gives everyone strength, courage, and mirroring to make sustainable changes.

Even when I'm unable to be with people who follow Ayurveda, I give my mind the company of positive thoughts, particularly those recorded by the ancient seers of India, whose every poetic verse unlocks abundant health-promoting wisdom. Reading uplifting books is a great way to keep good company, regardless of who is around you.



Take a shower daily.

Along with the company you keep, the other most important factor for mental health, according to Ayurveda, is taking a daily shower. Bathing purifies and cleanses your body. It leaves you feeling fresh and full of sattva. And a pure body leads to a pure mind, because your body is your mind's home. In [chapter 8](#), I'll discuss the details of how to shower well, but it's important to mention here that showering before breakfast is an excellent way to boost your digestive fire — as a clean body and mind are essential prerequisites for healthy digestion.

There's nothing like the fresh feeling of a good shower, how it wakes you up and makes you feel ready to face the day ahead. I invite you to make showering a part of your daily routine, if it's not already, and see how good you feel as a result. Remember: small

daily actions add up and make you shine with the light of sparkling sattva.



Grow a mandukaparni plant.



Mandukaparni (*Centella asiatica*), also known as centella or gotu kola, has serious potential to transform your mind by beautifully nourishing it and uplifting your consciousness. Known as a

rasayana (a rejuvenating or immunity-building herb), this plant's leaves represent the feet (*parni*) of a frog (*manduka*). Long before psychiatric medicines were invented, mandukaparni was used to relieve mental disorders such as schizophrenia, anxiety, depression, bipolarism, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, psychosis, and epilepsy.

My teacher encourages us to grow medicinal plants, particularly those used to treat imbalances with a mental origin, before consuming them. I've found that my mind always feels healed from the simple act of nurturing plants. You can cook with a handful of mandukaparni leaves or combine $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon of crushed leaves with warm water and drink first thing in the morning.



Light a lamp.



Knowledge removes ignorance, just as light removes darkness. The light of the lamp represents knowledge, illumination, auspicious behavior, health, and wealth in Ayurveda. It epitomizes the victory

of the light of knowledge over the darkness of our negative thinking, addictions, destructive habits, and excess emotional reactions.

I love lighting lamps for their potent symbolic value. The lamp oil (sesame oil or ghee) represents negative mental tendencies. The wick embodies ego. When the wick gets lit by the flame of Ayurvedic knowledge, negative tendencies slowly become exhausted and the ego also perishes in time. The flame burning upward symbolizes how we acquire knowledge to take us toward positive ideals.

In the Vedic tradition, it's believed that the light of the lamp bestows blessings of personal power, courage, recognition, discernment, detachment, and abundance. You can ask for these blessings while lighting the lamp. There's also a beautiful mantra that we traditionally chant when lighting a lamp.

It goes:

I bow to the light from the lamp, which brings brilliance representing knowledge, auspiciousness, health, wealth, and possessions, and which destroys my negative thoughts (which are enemies of everything previously mentioned).

You can offer this universal mantra while lighting your lamp if you wish. The most important thing, however, is simply to connect with the light of the lamp, as it represents welcoming the light of knowledge into your heart.



Do something of service, without strings attached.

In Ayurveda, mental stress is considered a major cause for a host of diseases. Much of our stress and sleepless nights come from our worries about current and/or future physical, financial, social, or emotional security.

Whenever we're able to step out of our own suffering enough to help someone else, we automatically become filled with joy. Even if all we can do is spend an hour a week serving soup in a soup kitchen, that one hour can really help us connect with our inherent goodness, bringing out our inner sattvic glow. Alongside food and lifestyle changes, selfless service is listed as a key method of disease recovery in the Ayurvedic texts.

Don't hesitate. See how you can be of service today.

In the Vedic spiritual tradition, the concept of service extends to the way we take care of plants. Even something as simple as taking the time to water plants is a sattvic act of service.



Value process over outcome by practicing Karma Yoga.

We live in a results-oriented world that prizes the end product more than the process. Karma Yoga (*karma* means “action” in Sanskrit) teaches us to put full attention on the process, letting go of attachment to its results. As the *Bhagavad Gita*, an ancient yogic text, says, “We have a right to our actions only and never to their results.” The fruits of our labor are always out of our hands. It’s the ego that wishes to believe it can control everything and everyone.

The way to discern whether an action is Karma Yoga is to consider how sattvic it is. Sattvic actions serve truth. They benefit others, and ourselves, while inspiring humility. Far from its frequent associations with humiliation, true humility acknowledges that we are each a mere instrument in the hands of a larger power, part of the interconnected web of relationships that comprise this universe. Humility is that feeling of smallness that washes over you whenever you stand by the ocean.

If you are serving others out of a need to gain approval, for instance, or are studying only to get perfect grades without enjoying the process of learning, you are not practicing Karma Yoga. In practicing Karma Yoga, you serve out of gratitude for all you’ve received. You feel much more freedom and joy in your

actions with an attitude of Karma Yoga. Rather than get overwhelmed by stress, you can feel satisfied to have the opportunity to serve.

Try reorienting yourself toward valuing the process over outcome in any context, not just service. Notice how much more freedom you feel in each unfolding moment.



Calm your mind with buzzing bee breathing exercise.

The buzzing bee breathing exercise is a powerful medicine for your body and mind. It calms restlessness, frustration, and anxiety. It gives your nervous system more strength and stability and is highly beneficial for cardiac disorders and clogged arteries. It helps with heart disease, high blood pressure, paralysis, migraine headaches, and hemorrhoids. As is the case with all yogic poses and breathing exercises, these benefits will accrue more when you are following an Ayurvedic diet and lifestyle to support your practice. Buzzing bee connects you to your true, peaceful nature, giving you immediate confidence while dissolving pessimism. It decreases mental reactivity and leads to increased balance and optimism.

It's my go-to breathing exercise. I practice it each morning and have taught it to many students and clients, who always immediately feel its positive, powerful impact. Buzzing bee is extremely beneficial for creative work and study. It naturally leads into meditation.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“I’ve got a lot to do. There’s a lot of detail. That gets me wound up sometimes. Practicing buzzing bee is helpful to gain calm and focus.”

— Craig

How to Do the Buzzing Bee Breathing Exercise

Practice this in the morning, at night (to help you sleep better), or anytime your mind feels anxious or stressed in any other way. Enjoy buzzing your stress, anxiety, and frustration away!

- 1.** Sit comfortably, with your back straight.
- 2.** Bring your thumb and index finger of each hand together in the knowledge *mudra* (hand gesture). (See the photo [here](#).) Keep your eyes closed and breathe slowly. This itself will calm your mind.

-
- 3.** Relax your hands from the knowledge mudra. Close your ears with your thumbs.



-
- 4.** Place your second and third fingers gently over your eyes, with index fingers on your forehead or eyebrows. Keep your mouth closed. Inhale deeply.



-
- 5.** Slowly exhale through your nose, making a humming or buzzing sound with your throat (it'll sound like MMMMMM). This makes one round.
-
- 6.** Do two more rounds, repeating steps 2 through 5 each time. As you gain more familiarity with the practice, gradually increase to 10 to 30 repetitions. Stop any time if you feel dizzy or very light-headed.



Clean up your inner and outer space.

Keeping your inner and outer space clean means thinking twice about what food you allow into your body, eating more sattvic foods (see Seasonal Food Guide for list), and following the guidelines in chapter 1. It also means focusing on positive thoughts instead of negative ones, and keeping your home and work environments clean.

When I start cleaning my home, I often find I've accumulated a lot of things, some I need and many I don't. The cleaning process can feel endless. There are hidden crevices full of unnecessary items that have built up over time, in the same way hidden emotions can creep into my mind when I'm inattentive.

Though cleaning up my home can feel overwhelming (like letting go of old emotions can seem daunting), I find myself breathing a great sigh of relief at how good it feels to be in a clean space. This same relief comes when I'm able to identify my own negative thinking and emotions through continual observation and gaining knowledge from my teacher and studying spiritual texts, which teach profound ways to gain mastery over your mind.

Keep your surroundings clean by doing a little cleaning around your home or office daily. You can maintain mental cleanliness by

following any of the practices in this book. Once your first small step becomes a practice, there's no looking back.



Speak your truth.

It's tempting to slip what's uncomfortable under the rug. The tendency to deny difficult or painful realities is a sign of *tamas* and can lead to unhealthy behaviors and emotions. But how do you speak your truth when the other person doesn't like it?

Along with focusing on process rather than outcome, start by finding a silent place to contemplate and reflect on your core needs — what you are unwilling to compromise. Personal freedom and integrity, for example, are my most prized inner possessions. I don't compromise them for anyone or anything. By reflecting on the importance of these needs, you build conviction. Conviction builds courage, and courage leads to expression.

Speaking your truth requires courage, as you risk the other person not understanding, or even leaving. But the reward is gaining your character. Those who stay respect your truth and start changing their behavior. Those who can't face your truth leave. This is for the best, as those with whom you surround yourself profoundly influence your mind. You want to attract people who

resonate with your truth. I was initially scared to tell my parents I was studying Ayurveda, as I didn't think they would understand or support me. And when I finally did tell them, they didn't understand at first. But the feeling I had when I spoke my truth was worth it — I felt free.

Don't confuse speaking your truth with expressing anger. To be truth, it has to be true in the past, present, and future. You should speak your truth in a pleasant way that benefits you and the other person (even if uncomfortable at first).



TRUTH AND COMPASSION

The idea of speaking “your truth” is somewhat of an oxymoron, in the sense that “your truth” is true only insofar as it is ultimately universal truth. To speak universal truth, there should be compassion for yourself and the one(s) you are speaking to.



Free yourself from the shackles of shame.

It's important to realize there's a difference between guilt and shame, and to identify areas where you've held on to shame. Shame is when you feel bad, broken, or unworthy. It happens when you tell yourself lies and believe them. Guilt, on the other hand, is remorse for something you have done. It can actually be a constructive emotion, empowering you to make important behavioral shifts.

In Ayurveda, the concept of *pragya aparadha* — which means going against (*aparadha*) your own wisdom (*pragya*) — is the root cause of many diseases. Can you identify an area of your life that's currently dragging you down, where you keep making mistakes even though you know better? For me, applying a lot of the practices in this book took time. I studied Ayurveda for six months before I started to follow it completely. I continued eating unhealthy foods, staying up late, and sleeping in, even though I knew doing so wasn't good for me. I had to come to terms with the shame and feelings of unworthiness that underlay my resistance to healthy living. Once I was able to identify and let go of shame, I felt guilt for not applying what I learned. The guilt helped fuel me to commit to all of the practices I share with you in this book. Try to channel feelings of shame into healthier feelings of remorse to fuel you toward acting for your own good more and more each day.



Connect with the power of intention to cultivate a spiritual practice.

The Sanskrit word for dedicated spiritual practice is *sadhana*, and it can completely transform your mind and life. The key to cultivating a spiritual practice is consistency. What you do daily matters more than what you do only occasionally. It all starts with the power of intention.

In Sanskrit, the word for resolution or intention is *sankalpa*. Anytime you wish to adopt a more mindful approach to your life, you can tap into the power of your intention. Just as a plant needs water, sunshine, and care to grow, our minds require similar nurturing. Setting a *sankalpa* is like planting a seed in the garden of your mind, which can grow beautiful spiritual flowers with regular mental and spiritual practices.

Often the excited resolutions we make at the start of a new year to exercise more frequently or eat healthier quickly fall to the wayside. For a *sankalpa* to truly have power, it must be thoughtfully contemplated first, so it comes from the deepest recesses of your being. I invite you to contemplate which

practice(s) you resolve to cultivate to change your mind and change your life.



Let go in Dhruvasana.



ABOVE: *Dhruvasana is named after a sage who was famous for his life of renunciation. You can connect with his spirit of renunciation while practicing this pose.*

Ayurveda believes all mental and psychological suffering is ultimately caused by attachment. The Sanskrit term for this type of attachment is *raga*, and it's a psychological dependence upon people, objects, and situations in your life. Anytime you want someone or something to be there for you, you set yourself up for the possibility of grief. Inner renunciation is the secret to removing the root cause of your mental suffering.

When you have excess grief over something that changes or doesn't fulfill your desires, you can develop full-fledged confusion, or *tamas*. You start to feel stuck, unsure of what to do — or not do. Attachments make you blind. They make it difficult to leave negative circumstances, like abusive relationships, or situations that are out of alignment with your deepest values. By consciously practicing letting go of your attachments to people, objects, and situations, you become free to enter a world of infinite creative possibilities. You see that all you need is your own personal power, which you already have. Renunciation gives you wings of freedom, to fly to unknown heights.

Who — or what — are you most attached to? Your house? Your job? Perhaps your partner, parents, pets, or children? I dare you to stand in Dhruvasana and imagine being completely fine without the attachments you identified. This doesn't mean walking away from anyone or anything. It's really a matter of shifting your inner attitude so nothing can constrain you. While it can initially feel scary, I assure you every ounce of practice and reflection you do in the direction of renunciation will move you toward reclaiming your personal power.

To do Dhruvasana, lift one leg and place your foot onto your other leg, either below or above your knee, but never right on your knee. If this is too hard for you, simply stand straight with both

feet on the ground. Keep your hands pressed together, with your thumbs touching your heart. This gesture (*mudra*) has a powerful calming effect on the changeable nature of your mind. Invite creative new possibilities into your heart and remember a big spiritual secret: your power grows in proportion to what you can let go.



Find inner stability in Tree Pose.



When you think of trees in nature, they're incredibly stable, rooted in the earth, embodying sturdiness. Trees give shade. They offer fruits and flowers freely, not asking for anything in return; they

give because their nature is giving. Many of us walk around with our head down, minding our business as we rush through our lives. Trees move and grow in an upward direction; their consciousness moves upward, toward the light of the sun.

Practicing Tree Pose gives you the opportunity to learn from and follow the tree's example. You, too, can move, breathe, and stand in an upward direction, toward sattva, the most uplifted mental state that yoga and Ayurveda teach is your true nature.

To do Tree Pose, start in Dhruvasana (described [here](#)). Slowly lift your hands from your heart to as far as they go over your head (while keeping your shoulders down and relaxed). As you plant your foot firmly into the ground and reach upward, contemplate how you, too, can give generously, like a tree offers its fruits freely. Generosity is so important in Ayurveda that it defines happiness-giving actions as those that benefit yourself *and* others. Imagine that. The Ayurvedic sages were so wise to know that the key to mental stability lies in regularly doing things to benefit others.



Cultivate and care for the garden of
your mind.



Changing the quality of your mind is largely a matter of sowing positive new seeds, while cutting away that which no longer serves you. Gardening is a great metaphor for this. We have to give our

garden proper sunlight, nutrition, soil, and water to grow. The mind is no different. Each positive thought you think and every positive action you take are ways to water the garden of your mind and expose it to sunlight.

You have to protect your garden from pesticides and toxicity. Similarly, you must protect your mind from toxic food, people, and surroundings. Cutting away dead flowers in the garden is like symbolically removing negative mental tendencies. While it can be difficult to say goodbye to these flowers (like it's sad to end negative relationships and hard to uproot bad habits), it's ultimately liberating. Cutting away that which does not serve you makes room for something positive to grow in its place.

Judgments, anger, fear, jealousy, and grief are causes for physical and mental health problems. Fortunately, all these emotions naturally decrease the more you cultivate inner satisfaction through healthy food, uplifting company, meditation, and other practices in this book.

Take this metaphor with you the next time you are in your garden or caring for your potted plants. As you trim your plants, think of cutting your negative mental tendencies; while planting something new, consciously plant and water seeds of positive qualities you want to develop. For example, you could say to yourself, "I'm planting the seed of self-respect," as you plant a beautiful marigold flower. This is yoga in action — uniting action with intention, while observing your mind. Watch your garden grow. Recognize how it reflects the blooming of the good qualities of your mind. It's a beautiful process.

PART 3

Freeing Your Spirit





CHAPTER 6

How to Actually Love Yourself

Ayurveda is truly holistic. It doesn't simply tell you what kinds of foods to eat or what practices will improve your mental health. Ayurveda takes it a step further, into the realm of spiritual healing. But you don't need to escape from everyday life to live in a cave somewhere in the Himalayas or meditate for hours on end to feel spiritual wellbeing. There are many practical ways to feel more spiritually connected daily in short pockets of time.



It all starts with a shift in how we think about love.

I struggled to understand how to get along better with my parents. I thought the way to improve our relationship was to love them more, but my teacher taught me that I needed to love myself more. How counterintuitive! The love we give others is equal to the love we give ourselves.

We have three main relationships in our lives: our relationship with objects (such as our computers, cars, and cell phones), our relationship with other people, and our relationship with our very own Self. A great force or power, called the higher Self, lives within each of us. The higher Self/spirit/consciousness in me is the same as it is in you. We're essentially one. That's why Indians greet each other with "*Namaste*": the Self in me bows to the Self in you. When we act from oneness, we act from the higher, spiritual aspects of ourselves.

Ayurveda teaches you to love and care for your body and mind so you can ultimately attain a state of oneness with a higher aspect within, and to connect with that in others, too. Loving others begins with loving yourself.



Give yourself an oil massage.



There's a direct connection between oiling your body and loving yourself. Oiling is one of my favorite daily self-care practices. According to the Ayurvedic text *Ashtanga Hridayam*, oiling “wards

off old age symptoms and exertion, bestows good vision, nourishes your body, and equips you with longevity, good sleep, and healthy skin.”

What happens to a piece of leather when it gets really dry? It falls apart, right? This also happens to your joints. When excess dryness accumulates in your joints, they start crackling, snapping, and, yes, popping. There can be pain, too. Apply oil to the same piece of leather and it becomes stronger and lasts longer. Same for your joints. That’s why Ayurveda recommends oiling your body daily, preventing wear and tear while making your skin glow. I used to look older when I was younger. Now people usually think I am younger — thanks, in large part, to my daily oiling practice.

Many of my clients and students have had similar positive experiences. One client, who had knee pain because of Baker’s cysts, shared how she was able to relieve her pain through oiling. “Though a specialist could diagnose my problem, none of the specialists I saw could help me with a specific solution to my problem. And although I haven’t had any issues with other parts of my body, I can feel a difference in this entire bag o’ bones! It relieves the pain! My knees feel so much better. It makes me feel young again (among the other Ayurvedic processes)!”

The feeling I get when I oil my body is similar to giving or receiving a hug from someone I really love. It’s very liberating to fill myself up with my own love — and feel and look better physically in the process.



WHEN TO AND WHEN NOT TO OIL

Loving your body with oil is recommended throughout the year, with the exception of spring if you have excess fluid and phlegm in the form of nasal or lung congestion or cold symptoms.

Do Oil:

- On an empty stomach
- After eliminating in the morning (ideally) or before dinner
- Before showering
- Your head, ears, and feet at night before sleeping

Don't Oil If You Are:

- Menstruating
- Constipated
- Suffering from a fever
- Having a cold or cough
- Having diarrhea
- Experiencing a rainy or cloudy day (environmental moisture makes it hard for your body to absorb the oil)
- Dealing with wounds or rashes (avoid oiling those areas)

How to Love Yourself with Oil

In winter and spring, or any time you have pain, use warm organic sesame oil. In summer and fall, use warm coconut oil, as coconut

oil has a cooling potency. If you're unsure whether your body needs cooling or heating oil, you can use a mixture of coconut and sesame oils.

- 1.** Fill a large bowl with hot tap water. Place the container of oil into the water and let warm, about 5 minutes.
- 2.** Sit on a towel and, using your fingers, rub oil onto the bottoms of your feet. Work your way up from your feet to your calves, knees, thighs, hips, lower back, stomach, chest, hands, arms, and neck (face is optional). Spend time oiling each body part. Rub the oil in an up-and-down motion when oiling long bones, and in a circular motion when rubbing your joints. Exert energy. This isn't like applying moisturizer; the more vigorously you apply the oil, the more you'll benefit.
- 3.** Provide extra love, care, and time (up to 7 minutes) oiling any area that's particularly painful and/or cracking.
- 4.** Shower with warm to hot water. The water's warmth will allow your skin and joints to more deeply absorb the oil.
- 5.** Finish with a mung dal soap substitute (see [here](#)) to prevent dry skin.



CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT?

Ayurvedic texts recommend oiling three parts of your body right before you go to bed:

- Your feet
 - The crown of your head
 - Your ears
-



Spend time alone.

There's a difference between being alone and being lonely. We all experience loneliness from time to time, whether or not we're alone. During some of the loneliest times of my life I was physically surrounded by many people, but I felt like no one understood me.

I used to spend so much time and energy making myself into what others wanted me to be, or trying to gain popularity in a particular school or social circle. Now in my alone time, I've had the opportunity to learn who I am. I do my best creative work when I give myself solitude, which allows me to hear my spirit's deeper stirrings. It also gives me time and space to reflect on my actions, reactions, and overall life direction.

Solitude nurtures personal transformation. You'll need daily time in solitude to put the new ways of living this book presents into practice. Even if it's only 5 to 10 minutes in the morning, that

small pocket of solitude will make a big difference in supporting a healthier and happier life.



STICK WITH IT

At first, solitude may be uncomfortable. Hidden memories may resurface. This can feel frightening, but know that whatever becomes visible will lose power as you bring it to the light of awareness. Seeing what's been hidden is a powerful first step toward healing.



Give yourself the gift of silence.

Silence and solitude are close companions. It's difficult to align with your spirit when you're distracted by the noise of other people, a radio, telephone, television, or loud music. In Ayurveda,

silence is intimately connected with the element of space. Like space, silence is as expansive as the sky. It's an essential ingredient for a spiritual life.

To heal the deeper issues in your life, you must first see them. This is hard to do if you are always distracted by your cell phone or a television screen. I used to try to fill up all my time with company, work, and other distractions. I realized later how I was subconsciously avoiding going inside and feeling intense emotions. In carving out silent time to sit with whatever arises, however, I find that the emotions always pass when I mindfully accept their presence. I also realize that I can apply the mental health-promoting tools I've learned (including all of the inner practices in this and the previous two chapters).

Silence can give you a new pair of eyes to receive transformational insights and clarity about things that once deluded you. Silence is the space in which your own wisdom can flower. It's the fertile soil for the garden of a peaceful, clear, and compassionate mind to grow, from the connection you cultivate with your spiritual essence. Silence is a gift you can give yourself, in small pockets, daily. Your spirit will thank you for it.



Seek your own approval.

Ayurveda believes having a strong spiritual connection with your higher Self is the key to preventing diseases and protecting your health. It starts by seeking your own approval.

Like so many of us, I was conditioned to believe that everything worth seeking was outside myself. I spent so much time, energy, and resources trying to manifest love, health, happiness, and a sense of security from socially acceptable sources: my work, relationships, achievements, or even service and giving.

I remember when my teacher asked me to organize a large photo archive at Vedika Global. It was an important project, the first of many service projects. Soon after starting, I was surprised when she asked me to dispense with the project, as she sensed I was doing it out of a desire for her approval. Four years later, I went back and completed the project without being asked. My teacher's excitement and thank-yous were far less important to me than the great satisfaction of doing something for the right inner reasons.

Mindfully cultivating a relationship with your higher Self by seeking your own approval makes you much less hungry for others' approval, love, and attention. Seeking your own approval ensures that your actions come from a space of service, rather than the trap of wanting others to approve of you.

Developing a "designer relationship," as my teacher says, with your own Self is so exciting. You get to learn how to fill yourself up with what really matters, and give yourself your own stamp of approval for following through on your higher intentions.



Give from a place of inner fullness.

This is very important for those of us who are givers or in service positions. I used to give a lot when I felt empty inside. I sought fulfillment from the outer world, which I quickly learned couldn't give me the deep fulfillment that ultimately comes from cultivating a relationship with my own higher Self.

When I gave while feeling empty, I often felt even more empty and depleted afterward. When I felt empty, it was important to turn inward, to receive more by listening to what my higher knowing was willing to communicate with me if I took the time to listen. It's best to go to a teacher when you feel empty, as that emptiness allows you to be an open vessel to receive knowledge and guidance.

I was deeply affected when my teacher advised, "Give when you feel full." To me, this meant regularly devoting myself to activities that give me a sense of nourishment, including all the practices in this book, so that I could give from a place where I feel completely satisfied — and don't need anything in return. Not even a thank-you. Give from fullness, and you will feel your abundance multiply and grow in beautiful ways.



Be like a lotus.



The lotus is an amazing flower. It grows out of mud. It doesn't allow water to enter it; rain droplets dance on its leaves until the sun causes the water to evaporate. Just as the lotus grows a beautiful

flower out of the mud, we can be in negative situations and yet keep our minds free from repeating negative patterns with the power of awareness and intention. We can be like the lotus, able to grow from the muck of negativity.

This takes practice. We may need support from a trusted counselor, teacher, or friend. Ultimately, the goal must be to become your own best friend. When you hold on to emotions like anger, you're the one who ends up suffering — it's like eating poison and expecting the person you're angry with to become sick. The lotus is the ultimate symbol of forgiveness and the power and beauty we gain from it.

Forgiveness is a gift you can give yourself, first and foremost. We can't change the past, but we can change how we respond to challenges instead of unconsciously reacting to them. Therein lies the key to true freedom. Forgiveness doesn't mean condoning another's actions, either. To really forgive, you have to experience all of your emotions — anger, pain, vulnerability, and grief. It takes vulnerability and courage to feel, and you have to feel to heal. Who are you holding on to anger toward? What past wounds are keeping you stuck in destructive behaviors? Honestly answering these questions is a brave first step toward forgiveness.

Forgiveness and mindfully letting go of your attachment to your own pain can be a long journey, but it's most worthwhile. Trust me. I lived with anger, pain, and grief; it was worth feeling all of these emotions fully to free myself from the unconscious grip they held. You can free yourself, too. The morning rituals in the next chapter will be particularly beneficial to you in the process. It takes time, but you're worth whatever time it takes to heal.



Slow down.



In today's busy world, we're accustomed to wanting it all and wanting it now. However, true transformation, which is not merely an intellectual experience, takes time. Slowing down and

cultivating patience is a practice of developing that deep inner intuition that can sense when someone or something in your life “feels right.” Patience is an essential ingredient in attaining the ultimate goal of Ayurveda, yoga, and Vedanta — *atma bodha*, which means to know (*bodha*) your own higher Self (*atma*).

Visiting the Taj Mahal (photo at right) brought the value of patience to life for me. I saw the considerable amount of time, love, and attention that went into every single small piece of colored glass, each of which was first cut by hand, precisely chiseled to the correct size, and traced onto cement, which was then carved to fit the glass piece in just the right way. The artists then repeated this process at least 20 times to complete just one of the millions of flowers (each no bigger than the size of your palm) that cover the halls and walls of the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal took 16 years of dedicated, slow, intense, patient labor to create. Now it serves as a great wonder of the world and inspires countless people.

To be a patient, too, takes great patience. Contrary to the quick-fix solutions we are bombarded with in the modern world, true healing takes time. Many of the practices in this book will provide immediate relief; others will take longer to bear fruit. Take on one step or practice at a time and really stick with it. The more patient you are with your healing process, the more you’ll enjoy the health and freedom that Ayurveda reminds you is your birthright.

There’s no need to do everything at once. Try slowing down any sped-up activity you do today. Perhaps that means walking more slowly or slowing down your speech. Whatever it is, see if slowing down helps you feel more grounded, calm, and clear.

Your life is ultimately your work of art. Take your time creating, and make sure to savor each step of the beautiful process of changing your life.



Reclaim your inner power in Cobra
Pose.



The snake is an amazing animal with strong survival power; if it's hungry and there's no food, it simply eats its own tail — and then

grows a new tail. A snake sheds its skin and moves on. In Ayurveda, a medicine made from cobra venom is said to remove all poisons.

In Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana), my teacher shares, “we evoke the spirit of the cobra: the poison that will destroy all poison. This pose will increase your ability to take in all poisons and endure. You will need the strength and survivor spirit of the cobra to experience the emotional and physical clearing that you will face on the spiritual path, to shed your old skin and move on.”

To do Cobra Pose, lie on your abdomen with your hands beneath your shoulders. Lift your head, neck, shoulders, and chest off the ground, pulling yourself up with the muscles in your spine, starting from the base of your spine. The snake is so strong because it's essentially one long muscle. Close your eyes and imagine yourself to be as strong, powerful, and independent as a thousand-headed cobra. Reclaim your power as you rise, strong and free, like the majestic cobra.



Practice evoking the sun as a friend
of all through Respectful Greeting
Pose.

Sun salutations (Surya Namaskar) are a series of 12 poses, the first of which is Respectful Greeting Pose (Pranamasana). This pose allows you to maintain your life force (*prana*), which imbues you with energy, vitality, and radiant immunity. Rather than finding yourself disappointed time and again when you don't receive what you want from other people, you can be strong, like the sun, able to befriend and love others. When you practice Respectful Greeting Pose and understand its deeper meaning of becoming a friend to all, you fill yourself up with your own light. You become what you seek.

To do this pose, stand with your feet firmly planted on the ground, spine straight and tall, and head lifted. Mindfully bring your hands together at your heart center. When you touch your thumbs to your heart, humbly bow to the sun as being “a friend of all.” Really focus on connecting with your beautiful heart. With this sacred gesture, you're staying in your own space, settling into yourself, and then greeting another with respect and affection. In this way, you don't lose yourself in others. You can stay grounded in your own higher Self. Everything worth having is within you.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“When I practice Sun Salutations with the mantra and meaning, I feel I'm joining my heart, mind, and body to feel the vibration of the mantra and can connect to its meaning through my consciousness.”

— Clint



MANTRA PLUS RESPECTFUL GREETING POSE FOR GOOD HEALTH

To benefit further, mentally repeat “I respectfully greet the sun as a friend of all” nine times while practicing Respectful Greeting Pose. The combination of this mantra and the pose can benefit the following conditions:

- Anxiety
- Psychosomatic disorders
- Asthma
- Compulsive addictive eating
- Excessive itching
- Heartache and loneliness



Go outside.

Sometimes loving yourself is as simple as taking a step outside. One of Ayurveda's main goals is to restore your harmony with nature. The Ayurvedic sages spent their entire lifetime observing nature. Spending time outdoors is a wonderful way to absorb nature's medicine.

There is so much to learn from nature. I remember a family vacation to Mexico, where we ended up in a jungle. It started raining, so I sat inside a gazebo gazing at a small island that was home to jaguars and black panthers. I spent the entire afternoon watching them with awe. I could see how much power, purpose, and dexterity went into each and every stride they took. Their power and purpose inspired me to contemplate how I could imbue greater dexterity into my actions. I later connected with these creatures as I practiced Cat Pose (Marjarasana), a yoga pose named after them.

An exercise you can try today is to sit by a window in your home and observe what you see outside. Write down a few observations. For those who live in more urban areas, these observations can be as minute as noticing the shadows cast by buildings. Then, sit in this same place around the same time tomorrow. Notice how things are different.

Nature teaches us a lot about change. Through the processes of digestion, aging, birth, death, career transitions, and moving homes, much changes in our lives. Just as nature yields gracefully to change, so can we. I observe how effortlessly nature adapts to change, like how birds gracefully migrate southward as it gets cold, and how the sky makes space for the sun, along with the storms and clouds, without stating any preference. I feel inspired by nature to not stay stuck in my fears and resistances. With nature as my teacher, I invite all things in my life to come and go, so that I may remain as supple as the wind, and face the circumstances in my life with courage and strength. As you go outside and observe,

see if you, too, can start surrendering to all the natural changes in your life.



Practice natural yoga poses to connect your body, mind, and spirit.

Did you know you can practice yoga even if you're bedridden or in a wheelchair? The way I teach yoga, from my teacher's lineage, is accessible to anyone and everyone, regardless of age, flexibility, or strength.

The main factor that makes yoga not only universal but healing at deeper levels is the mindful intention (*sankalpa*) that you bring and connect with while practicing. This mindful intention is what connects your body, mind, and spirit.

The key is connecting with each part of your body before moving it. This expedites the healing potential of each of your movements. The following exercises can be practiced anywhere, by anyone, ideally when your stomach is not full.

Neck rolls. Sit straight, with your eyes closed. Visualize your neck. How does it feel? Observe any stiffness you may be experiencing. Set an intention that “I, the all-powerful one, will now move my neck from side to side.”

While staying connected with your neck, start slowly moving your head and neck to the right side, center, and then the left side, and back to center. Repeat this a few more times, moving mindfully all the while.

Lotus fingers. Close your eyes. Take a moment to connect with your beautiful hands and fingers. Your hands do so much for you. They make it possible to write, shake hands, drive, open and close doors, cook, and turn the pages of this book. Really appreciate your hands for all they empower you to do.

Once you feel fully connected to each of your fingers and hands, offer an intention that “I will now allow my fully healthy Self to mindfully move my fingers into the form of a bud by bringing all of my fingers together.” Offer the intention to “open each of my fingers as wide as possible, allowing them to blossom like beautiful lotus flowers out of my very own hands.” Continue slowly opening and closing your fingers.



ABOVE: Practicing opening and closing your hands in lotus is a powerful way to align your head, heart, and hands.

Ankle rolls. Sit on the ground and extend your legs in front of you. Take a moment to breathe here. Really feel your feet. You can wiggle your toes to help you do that.

Set an intention that “I will now allow the infinite power of my Spirit to move my feet in circles.” Slowly rotate your right foot in a circular motion. After a while, reverse the direction of the rotation. Repeat with your left foot.



NATURAL YOGA FOR THE BEDRIDDEN

My teacher once told me a beautiful story about how her grandfather Baba taught her to do ankle rolls when she was bedridden as a teenager from a genetic health challenge (which she has successfully overcome). Back then, she didn't feel like she could move anything due to her acute health condition, but then Baba told her she could because she is more than her body — she is the infinite Spirit. This inspired her to start to slowly move her ankles. As she moved her feet, Baba shared that she “was moving consciousness.” I love that.



Connect with the unconditionally
loving spirit of a dog in Downward-

Facing Dog.

Dogs love you no matter what. They don't care if you didn't do everything perfectly or didn't achieve a goal you set for yourself. They love you even if you feel like the biggest loser in the world.

It is deeply healing to spend time taking care of dogs. I grew up scared of dogs, but the time I spent taking care of my teacher's dogs, Saya and Sakhi, a black Labrador and a German shepherd, was a deeply healing experience. They were both gentle giants. Saya, in particular, was like a little saint dressed up as a dog. He was content to sit still and contemplate, it seemed. The unconditional love those dogs provided me was unlike anything I had ever experienced before.

To do Downward-Facing Dog, first come onto your hands and knees. Straighten your legs and lift your knees from the floor so you balance on your feet and hands. Lower your heels to the floor and actively press the whole surface of your hands into the ground. Really connect with the spirit of an unconditionally loving dog.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“Practicing yoga like this feels like a whole different experience that brings the physical and spiritual part of yoga together in a way that I truly cherish.”

— Kathleen



Nourish your heart with the sound of OM.

Whales can easily live more than 100 years. Do you know their longevity secret? They breathe really, really slowly. Slowing down your breathing through the practice of yogic breathing exercises (*pranayama*) enhances the quality of your life.

One beautifully simple breathing exercise you can practice anytime is called *udgeeth*, which means “song” or “singing”. I like to think of it as a whale-singing breathing exercise that makes you feel as strong and full of vibrant life force as a powerful blue whale in the ocean. I often imagine myself sitting in the mouth of such a whale as I practice it.

To do it, simply inhale through your nose, then chant OM as you exhale, holding the “O” sound for three times as long as the “M” sound. Focus on your heart as you inhale.

This is an excellent breathing exercise to practice if you suffer from low energy, depression, grief, lack of concentration, anxiety, or insomnia. Practice it before you sleep if you have trouble falling or staying asleep. Practice it in the morning to start your day on the best possible foot. Practice it anytime you find yourself absorbed in worries and sadness. It will nourish your physical and emotional heart, unlocking the power of love within you.



Create a personal sanctuary space
in your home.



My present sanctuary space is made out of a simple cushion and cloth that I've adorned, upon which I've placed objects that are important to me. In the beginning it comprised a simple collection

of letters from loved ones that made me feel safe and held when I first moved to New York City. As time and my spiritual journey progressed, I felt inspired to add photos of spiritual teachers, written poetic verses that uplift my spirit, beads, spiritual books, and more.

Now my personal sanctuary has three photos. One is of my teachers: Acharya Shunya, her grandfather Baba, and his father, Bade Baba. The second is of my maternal grandfather, Amarchand Khokhani, who was a renowned Ayurvedic doctor in India. Though I didn't know him long while he was alive, and did not even know he practiced Ayurveda until I discovered it myself, I feel his spirit guides me. I can connect with it most profoundly at my sanctuary space. This space also has photos of Saya and Sakhi, my teacher's beloved dogs, which I had the honor of caring for while they were alive. I also keep a lamp in this space that I light each morning after showering.

Do you have photos, quotations, or statues that inspire the best in you? These would be wonderful to assemble into a personal sanctuary space in a way that's most personally meaningful to you. What you put into it matters less than the intention of connecting with your spirit while creating your space in a significant way. Your positive intentions will grow in strength each time you visit your sanctuary space.



CHAPTER 7

Inspired Ancient Practices to Transform Your Mornings

Starting your day in an inspiring and invigorating way profoundly impacts your overall health. Ayurveda recognizes the power and potential of morning practices to teach you to truly take your health and life into your own hands.



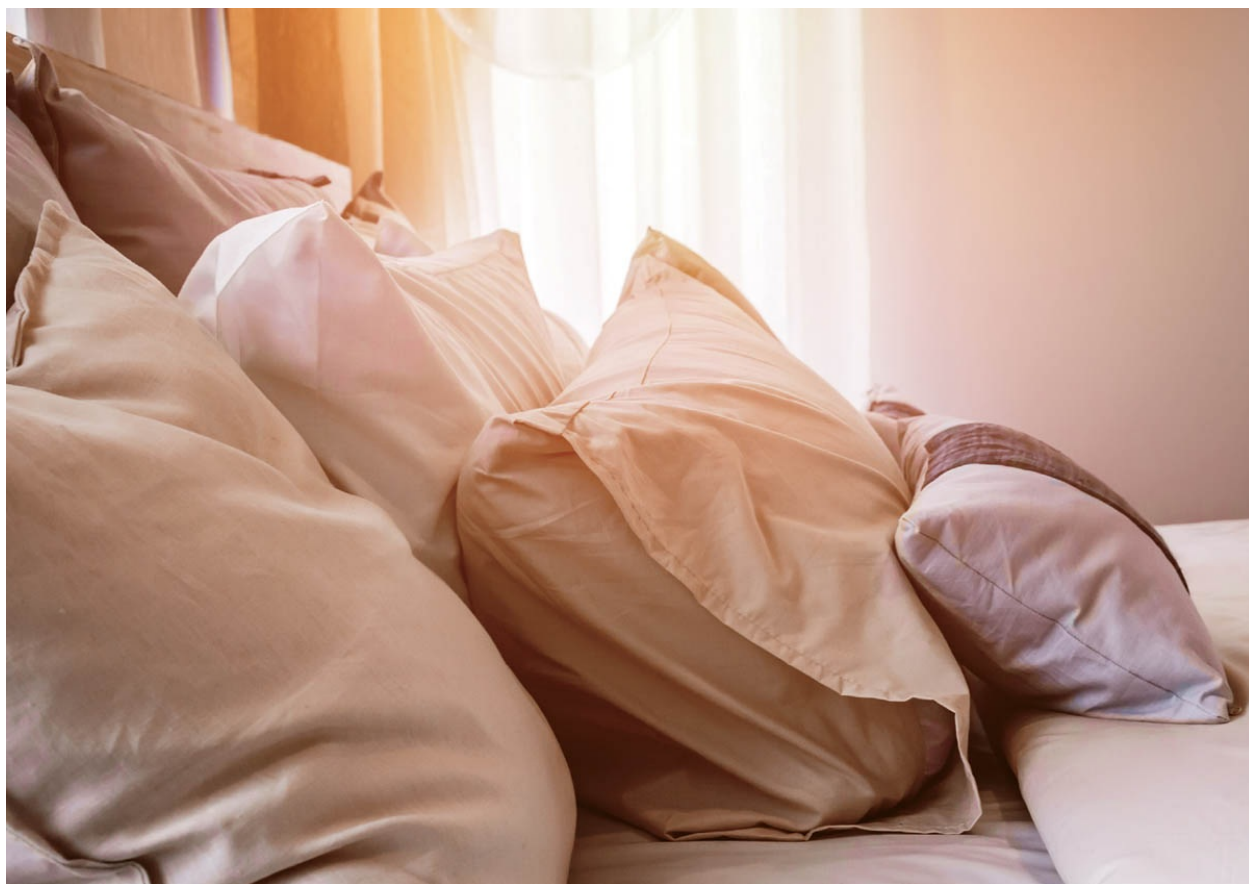
Prior to beginning my Ayurvedic practice, I used to wake up feeling anxious. My mind would be racing, often filled with dread and worry about all the things I needed to get done. I wanted to simply cover my head with my comforter! I would look at my phone and write emails while still in bed. All of this only reinforced my constant stress and anxiety.

The practices I share with you in this chapter have greatly transformed my health and freed me from years of anxiety. They have given birth to a feeling of true freedom and empowerment from within and provide me with the strength, courage, and wisdom to navigate my life and serve others from the depths of my being.

Our mornings tend to be rushed and harried. We often race to work or school, without even eating breakfast, much less incorporating any other kind of practice. The practices in this chapter don't take very long. Even if you have many family responsibilities and/or a demanding job and aren't getting adequate sleep, you can still apply one or more of these practices and thereby transform your mornings.



Wake up early.



One of the best ways to curb negative thinking and depression, connect with nature, and increase *sattva* (mental clarity and positivity) is to wake up early, between 4 and 6 a.m. Doing so helps you connect with the sun, a symbol of our eternal, expansive, unlimited being.

The ancient seers or sages (*rishis*) of the yogic and Ayurvedic traditions have long regarded the early morning as a spiritually charged time. The rishis recommend that we wake up early each morning to soak in the abundant blessings of this time of day, which is considered the most auspicious time for meditating, contemplating, practicing yogic poses and breathing exercises, and performing other practices in this chapter.

When you wake up between 4 and 6 a.m., you are blessed with abundant sattvic vibrations, which infuse your day with positivity,

hope, and peace. Sattva is a quality connected with clarity, compassion, balance, purity, health, happiness, harmony, and a sense of universal love. Ayurveda teaches that you are naturally full of sattva — it's just a matter of reconnecting with it. Nature offers you free medicine at this time to do just this!

If you're accustomed to waking up much later than 6 a.m., gradually adjust your waking time. Set your alarm back 15 minutes each day or every other day, until you're waking up comfortably at 6 a.m. or earlier. In addition to all the mental health benefits of waking up early, doing so also strengthens your ability to fall asleep earlier at night — and improves your sleep quality, too.

The art of the Ayurveda way of life is all about restoring your innate connection with the natural world, as a way to connect with your own true inner nature, which is a repository of health, wholeness, and unlimited freedom and power.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“Waking up early was a process. I went in 15-minute intervals. Rising early makes a difference, and when I sleep past 6 a.m., I'm sluggish and don't have a lot of energy. It's natural medicine.”

— Ruby



Start the day by gazing at
your hands.



Your first thought upon awakening in the morning can set the tone for your entire day. I think of life as being like an empty canvas. Your thoughts, speech, and actions are the palette you can use to

paint any picture you want. Why not, then, paint a picture of personal power, abundance, and creativity?

As soon as I awaken each morning, I gaze at my hands while affirming that personal power, health, abundance, creativity, and knowledge all lie in my own hands. Having struggled with anorexia nervosa as a teenager, I felt powerless for a long time. My insistence on eating as little food as I could was about personal control. What my ego fooled me into seeing as a spiritual quest for self-mastery led to a wasting away of my bodily tissues in reality. The real change needed to come from a deeper space, from a place within.

Through this morning ritual, I affirm that I am held by an all-pervading spiritual power, which reminds me I am never alone in facing obstacles. I cannot control what happens to me, but I'm in full control of my response to the hardships of my life. Learning to respond instead of react to challenges has and will continue to mold me into a stronger, wiser, and more compassionate person.

As you think, so you become. A popular expression from the *Upanishads*, an ancient Indian spiritual text, beautifully expresses how you can:

Sow a thought, reap an action; Sow an action, reap a habit; Sow a habit, reap a character; Sow a character, reap a destiny.

By making your first thought in the morning one of affirming the abundance, creativity, and power that reside in your hands, you plant powerful seeds to help manifest these qualities in your character. This morning practice helps you affirm that your health, life, and destiny all truly lie within your own hands.



Honor the sun.

Ayurveda reveres the sun as the ultimate bestower of amazing health. The sun is, literally, the source of all life. We are solar-powered creatures, and living in harmony with nature's rhythms, as dictated by the course and direction of the sun, empowers us to live the healthiest and happiest lives possible. Anchoring my mind in the sun has meant, first and foremost, greeting the sun upon rising to offer my prayers, gratitude, and desire to embrace my innermost nature, which is as strong and powerful as the sun in the sky.

We can learn a great deal from the sun. The sun is completely independent: it shines whether or not it receives recognition or approval for doing so, simply because the nature of the sun is to shine. Like the sun, we are the source of our own light. A big source of mental stress arises from our expectations and desires not being fulfilled by others in our lives, whether our parents, siblings, friends, teachers, lovers, children, or coworkers. If we let go of these desires, we can fill ourselves up with love from the inside and actually *become* love itself. The Vedic spiritual tradition teaches that we are filled with abundant, universal love and light at the truest, deepest essence of our own being. Being love is about acknowledging our fullness, and acting from a space where we feel full, rather than empty or lacking.

A beautiful universal Vedic sun practice called Arghyam consists of respectfully offering water to the sun from a copper vessel. To do it, go outside on a balcony or in a garden. Pour the water around yourself in a clockwise circle, look at the sun, and touch your heart with your hands. In doing so, you affirm the inherent power and freedom of your own being.



Study spiritual books and inspiring teachings.

Our minds are incredibly receptive in the morning hours. When we spend the early morning in the company of great texts, or listening to inspiring talks, we plant many powerful seeds of insights in our consciousness for the day ahead.

I love taking my journal off my bookshelf in the morning and copying statements out of universal spiritual texts like the *Upanishads* as part of my morning practices. It feels so grounding to curl up with the positive thoughts outlined in these and other texts.

Because what we pay attention to tends to increase in our lives, it's a great idea to spend quality time studying the lives and

teachings of great saints and leaders from different traditions.

Copy down a passage from your favorite book of wisdom today. You will also notice over time how this wisdom settles deeper into you and impacts you during the times you most need it.



THE POWER OF WORDS

I have personally deeply benefited from spending hours listening to audio recordings of my teacher's lectures and transcribing them, word by word. For example, when my teacher's beloved dog Sakhi became sick, it was hard to face losing her. I had taken care of her often and grown attached to her. When facing Sakhi's last days, my teacher's lessons on letting go of attachments, which I had listened to and transcribed during my morning practice, returned to me. I was able to recover from this loss much more quickly because my study and contemplation of mindfully letting go of attachment became a practice I put into action during this difficult time.



Write in a journal.

Writing in a journal is a powerful way to do self-study; it also helps you process your experiences and gain greater insight. Writing and contemplation go hand in hand. In the Vedic spiritual tradition, contemplation is a critical step in the process of acquiring knowledge; it's the link between receiving knowledge and acting upon it.

Acting in wiser ways starts with the habit of carving out a little silent time in the mornings to provide space in which your creativity can flow. Writing in a journal helps strengthen a beautiful cycle of personal evolution and transformation. I've found it powerful to write personal affirmations, along with my resolved intentions. The act of writing down what I intend has a way of strengthening my resolution to accomplish whatever I set out to do; it's a fuel that sparks my motivation to change.

As you read this book and identify practices you'd like to adopt in your life, I encourage you to write down your intentions in a journal. It'll be very rewarding to look back and track progress toward your goals. By writing about your experiences applying Ayurveda to your life, you can start to write your own story of health and freedom.



Let go of negative thoughts and emotions with a special water practice.



This ancient Vedic water practice (called Sandhya Vandam) is an incredibly powerful way to consciously let go of mental negativities, navigate personal transitions, and feel lit by your

spirit. Because Vedic rituals typically take years to fully learn, I'm including here a simplified version that you can use to bless yourself every morning.

This is a heartfelt universal practice of connecting simple positive affirmations with water, to increase their potency. Water has an amazing cleansing effect, helping you let go of that which needs to be let go while affirming and strengthening what is positive in your life.

To do this practice, you can use any small vase or pot. Traditionally, a *kalash* (a copper pot with a large base and a smaller mouth, shown [here](#)) is used.

Fill your vessel with water. As you hold your vessel in both of your hands, chant any mantra you wish into the water. You can chant OM if you like, or you can simply silently affirm to yourself any mindful intention (*sankalpa*).

I love silently affirming the words on the next page. You can simply hold your vessel in your hands while you do this, or you can place all of your fingers (except your thumbs) into the water and then touch each named part of your body with the water as you affirm each of these universal blessings.

Universal Blessings for Water Practice

*May my **head** be filled with the light of wisdom.*

*May my **eyes** see what is auspicious.*

*May my **ears** hear that which is auspicious.*

*May my **mouth** be free from eating disorders and food-related conditions.*

*May my **throat** be blessed with truthful words.*

*May my **heart** be free to give and receive love.*

*May my **navel** be free from anxiety and digestive challenges.*

*May my **hands and feet** guide me to perform positive actions in the world, which bring myself and others greater health and freedom.*



**Chant inspiring mantras
in the morning.**



Starting your day by chanting uplifting mantras builds strength and discipline. By focusing on a specific elevating statement or words early in the morning, you plant seeds of positive thinking that return to you throughout the day. The practice of chanting mantras in the morning has transformed my anxiety. It has given me the ability to be present in the moment with whatever I'm doing.

To help recite the mantra, you can use a string of 108 beads, called a *mala* in Sanskrit. Chanting mantras with the aid of a mala is a powerful practice for gaining self-mastery. In practical terms, the beads on the mala help you count the number of times you have recited your mantra.

We typically offer mantras in a multiple of 3, whether 3, 9, 18, 27, or 108. Just one mantra, offered with feeling and intention, however, can do wonders to shift your consciousness.

First, mentally call on a witness who inspires you, as we need support in fighting our negative thoughts and emotions. This witness can be a relative, a teacher, a deity, or even the sun, moon, fire, or a beloved animal. Imagine their presence in your heart and mind.

Then make a mindful intention to offer mantras on your mala. You can either whisper the mantra aloud, which can help focus your mind, or chant mentally. I usually chant the famous Vedic Gayatri Mantra. The Vedic spiritual tradition considers the Gayatri Mantra to be the most powerful medium for awakening health and consciousness. The mantra goes like this:

*Let us meditate upon the supremely great luster of the Sun.
Let that inspire our intelligence.*

While the Gayatri Mantra has been incredibly powerful for me, you can chant any mantra, in any language and from any tradition you like. The intention is always far more potent than the particular words you choose to chant.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“At the beginning, my mind isn’t completely focused. By the end of 108 rounds of a mantra, I’ll be in a space where I’m engulfed in the mantra and the meaning behind it, and I am ready to contemplate within my spiritual space.”

— Clint

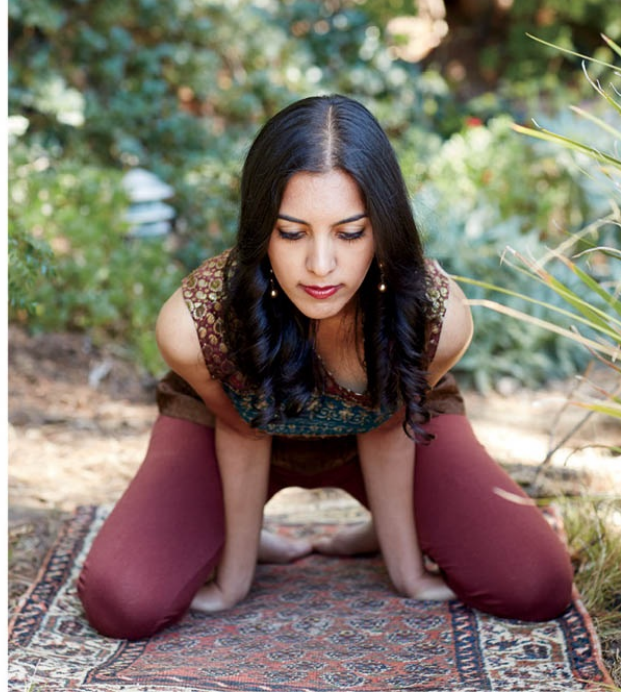
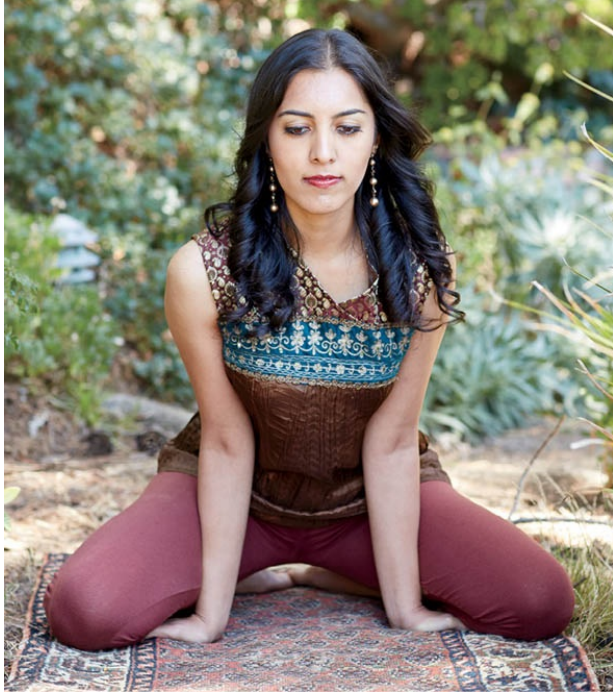


SIGNIFICANCE OF 108

In the universal Vedic tradition, the number 3 symbolizes completion: the beginning, middle, and end. The cycle of the day (morning, afternoon, evening) and of your life (birth, life, death) happens in intervals of 3. The number 9, which is 3 times 3, and its multiples (like 108) are thus considered very auspicious. We gestate in our mother's womb for 9 months. This book has 108 practices and can be thought of as a mala of inspiring practices for giving birth to a new and improved you.



Evoked the powerful spirit of a lion.



Practice the yoga posture Simhasana (named after *simha*, meaning “lion”) to connect with the spirit of the lion, making you feel strong, vigorous, majestic, and powerful. Physically, Lion Pose positively impacts your sense of hearing. It clarifies anger and enhances your ability to recall, understand, and implement knowledge at the right time, when you really need to, by allowing *prana* (subtle life force energy) to travel from the base of your body to your mind, where it enhances your mental functions. Lion Pose also increases your digestive power as you apply gentle pressure to the abdomen with your elbows.

Lion Pose is excellent to practice if you’re feeling fearful. It’s particularly beneficial for public speakers, as it helps cure stammering and stuttering, and it reduces the fear of speaking before a crowd.

Because this pose is more advanced, I highly recommend learning it directly from a teacher, then referring to the following steps as review to practice on your own. As with all the yoga poses

in this book, it is more important to connect with the intention and experience of being like the lion than actually doing the steps shared below.

To practice, sit on your knees and spread them open. Place your hands on the ground in front of you and turn them inward, so that your fingers face your body. Tuck them under your legs, below your thighs. Lean forward, like a lion about to attack, with the weight of your body against your arms. Inhale deeply through your nose. Then, open your mouth wide and stretch out your tongue, open your eyes wide, and exhale with a sound that resembles a lion's roar. Gaze in front of you and repeat this roaring action three to five times, pausing in between each roar to gently massage your throat. You can also do this pose in a chair.

I love connecting with the spirit of the lion each morning. Lion Pose has improved my digestion, helped me gain healthy weight that makes me feel better in my body, and literally and figuratively strengthened my voice. I know of no better way to go within myself to reclaim my personal power than roaring in Lion Pose.

Watch online videos of lions roaring. It helps to spend time observing the lions' behavior. They're wonderful teachers of how strong and powerful you can be when you take steps to reclaim the mighty positive force you have deep within.



FEEL LIKE A LION

It's essential to spend time connecting with the feeling of being as powerful and strong as a mighty lion. The first time I did Lion

Pose, I felt silly. I was in my teacher's garden and couldn't roar because I got stuck thinking: "I'm a woman and I'm small." I had to close my eyes and really believe that a lion lives inside me. Once I was able to connect with that, I scared my German shepherd friend Sakhi with my roar!



Practice an empowering sun meditation.



I love watching the sunrise each morning. The sun is a potent symbol. It represents personal power, perseverance, strength, courage, health, wealth, wisdom, and life itself. As I watch the

sunrise while doing the meditation below from my great teacher Baba, I love imagining each ray filling me with its special blessings of abundance, knowledge, creativity, and abiding health.

I often find myself smiling or even crying tears of joy upon seeing the sunrise. It's a reminder of the opportunity to have a fresh start each and every day. Every ray creates a unique art exhibition, and tickets to nature's exquisite art show are free.

Remember that you have all of the power and strength of the sun within you. Even if you can't see the sun rising in the sky, you can still practice this meditation. Close your eyes. Imagine the sun filling your heart with its brilliant rays. Observe your body, from head to toe. Notice any discomfort you may be holding on to anywhere. Breathe into it. Imagine that the sun's rays, filled with abundance, health, creativity, knowledge, and lasting joy are bringing healing into the areas that need it.

Rather than trying to completely clear your mind of thoughts, simply notice what thoughts are naturally arising. Through the power of observation, you have the ability to gain awareness of the nature of your thoughts, and to start to transform them. What comes to the surface of your mind to be seen can no longer hold power over you. Hence, this practice of simply observing your thoughts, without judging them, is a powerful step in the direction of self-mastery and spiritual transformation. Feel the sun shine into the recesses of your mind and spirit as you observe your thoughts.

PART 4

Putting It All Together





CHAPTER 8

The Ayurvedic Daily Routine Prescription

A lot of us suffer from stress-related issues such as insomnia, anxiety, burnout, and digestive disturbances. Stress is what occurs whenever you fall out of sync with nature's cycles. Stress management, then, is largely a matter of realigning yourself with nature and living in harmony with its daily rhythm. In Ayurveda, daily self-care practices are called dinacharya, which means "to follow the rhythm of the day."



On any given day, the three *doshas* (see [The Three Doshas](#) for more information) each take predominance in the atmosphere during a set period. By aligning your behaviors with these forces, you can bring yourself into greater alignment with nature and improve your health.

Get going and get creative with *vata*. Since time immemorial yogis and followers of Ayurveda have recommended awakening early (see [Wake up early](#)) because vata dosha, made of the air and space elements, predominates the atmosphere in the early morning, from 2 to 6 a.m. The basic nature of air is to move. This makes it easiest to wake up, eliminate, and get moving during the vata time of morning. We're advised to do less physically strenuous work from 2 to 6 p.m., when this bioforce becomes activated again. When you feel spacey during this time in the afternoon, you are naturally feeling the presence of the air and space elements contained in vata dosha. Because creativity is an inherent quality of vata dosha, this can be a great time to write and do other creative activities.

Use your strength and rest with *kapha*. The kapha dosha governs the time from 6 to 10 a.m. and 6 to 10 p.m. It is kapha's presence that makes it hard to wake up past 6 a.m., because this dosha is made of the heavy earth and water elements. When you stay in bed past 6 a.m., the atmosphere takes on a heavy, inert quality, making it very difficult to get up and moving. The morning kapha period is actually a great time for strenuous exercise and other hard physical work, like moving boxes or lifting heavy objects. Your body is at its strongest during the kapha times of day. Due to kapha's grounding, stabilizing qualities, Ayurveda recommends winding

down your day and going to sleep before 10 p.m., when the other kapha period ends.

Digest with *pitta*. Pitta dosha consists of fire encased in water. Just as fire has the power to convert whatever it touches to other forms, including ashes, pitta dosha accordingly governs the principle of transformation. Pitta dosha provides you with mental and physical fire. This bioforce rules the atmosphere from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day, and from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. each night. Because of the strong connection between pitta dosha and digestive fire (*agni*), it's important to eat lunch in the middle of the pitta time, around noon (see [Make lunch your largest meal.](#)). This connection also explains why you may crave a midnight snack if you stay up during the pitta time of night.

Modern doctors say your lifestyle comprises 75 percent of why you get sick. The Ayurvedic sages discovered thousands of years ago that your daily routine can be a powerful source of health and wellness.



Opt for more natural toothpaste options for healthier teeth.

Ayurveda recommends you clean your teeth with bitter-tasting ingredients, since the bitter taste has a cleansing effect on your mouth. It clears out any previous tastes, wiping your mouth clean for new tastes. I love how much cleaner my mouth feels when I use bitter-tasting toothpastes than it did when I would use more mainstream toothpastes.

Neem powder or oil (from the fruits and seeds of the neem tree) are wonderful natural anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial agents that purify your blood. Neem is an excellent ingredient to have in your toothpaste.

Turmeric powder mixed with water makes a refreshing mouthwash alternative. It's a great pain-relieving spice, which also reduces inflammation.

Pomegranate fruit rind has been traditionally used in Ayurveda for dental disease prevention. It helps remove plaque from your teeth, has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, benefits your heart and brain, and uplifts your spirits.

To make your own toothpaste, grind a pomegranate fruit peel into a powder and mix it with $\frac{1}{4}$ part neem powder and $\frac{1}{4}$ part turmeric powder. Add a little sesame oil to bind it together or simply sprinkle it onto your toothbrush.



Do oil pulling to strengthen your voice and boost your oral health.

When I started teaching, my throat and voice used to hurt after talking nonstop. I marveled at how my teacher managed to speak, teach, and counsel for up to 12 hours straight with the same strength, passion, and firmness of voice. What was her secret? It turned out it was oil pulling.

Ever since I started oil pulling, I've noticed a remarkable increase in the strength and power of my own voice. I recommend this practice to my clients who teach, speak, sing, and otherwise rely upon their voices, and many have been similarly amazed by the results. This ancient practice also prevents wrinkles, helps strengthen and stabilize your jaw and teeth, reduces gum inflammation, decreases nausea, prevents and counteracts tooth sensitivity, stimulates your taste buds, and prevents dryness of throat and lips (including cracking of lips).

Oil pulling has become a popular fad in modern times. As with any practice that has origins in ancient wisdom traditions, it's important to get the prescription right before passing it along. Sesame oil is the preferred oil; many online sources recommend coconut oil, but its heaviness, sweetness, and cooling qualities make it difficult for your mouth to absorb the full benefits of this practice.



OIL PULLING SLOWS AGING

Oil pulling gives strength to your facial muscles and is one of the best anti-aging practices to prevent wrinkles.

How to Do Oil Pulling

The best time to do oil pulling is on an empty stomach, before breakfast. Professional singers, speakers, and teachers can do this again at night for extra voice protection.

-
- 1.** Brush your teeth, ideally with a neem-based toothpaste.
 - 2.** Scrape your tongue with a copper, silver, or gold tongue scraper. This practice ensures your mouth remains toxin, odor, cavity, and infection-free.
 - 3.** Place 1 or 2 teaspoons of sesame oil into your mouth. Swish the oil around your teeth and mouth, ideally for up to 3 minutes, then spit it out.
-
- 4.** Swish around a small amount of water, then spit it out.



WHEN TO AVOID OIL PULLING

Oil pulling is good for most people, though it's not recommended for anyone experiencing:

- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Alcoholism (it's not appropriate to convert this into a hangover remedy, despite what many modern sources suggest)
- Any kind of infection
- Fevers

- Periods (women should stop during menstrual cycles)
 - Phlegm
 - Eye inflammation
 - Congestion
 - Bleeding conditions (bleeding from anus, skin, nose, etc.)
-



Drink warm or room-temperature water soon after waking up to aid healthy digestion.

The downward-moving form of vata dosha predominates the atmosphere from 4 to 6 a.m. When you wake up during this time, or at least before sunrise, drinking warm water supports the downward-moving action of vata dosha, helping you eliminate your bowels.

Drinking a small glass of warm water upon waking up in the morning is so beneficial that the ancient Ayurvedic text *Bhavaprakash* proclaims: “He who drinks warm water upon

awakening shall live for a hundred years and more, free from diseases and old age.” Because of its positive impact on digestion (the root of overall health in Ayurveda), drinking warm water before sunrise is said to help reduce hemorrhoids, edema, sprue syndrome, chronic fever, indigestion, and skin diseases.



Eat on time to maximally benefit from your food.

Ayurveda recommends eating breakfast sometime between 7 and 9 a.m., lunch between 12 and 1:30 p.m., and dinner between 5 and 7 p.m.

According to Ayurveda, lunch is the most important meal of the day. That's because your digestive fire peaks between 12 and 1 p.m., the same time the sun is at its peak. All of Ayurveda's daily routine practices are deeply synced with the sun's cycle. We want to keep at least 3 hours between meals and between eating and sleeping, which is why breakfast and dinner should be timed accordingly.

Ayurveda teaches that you're not only what you eat, but what you successfully digest. Because your health is so connected with your digestion, it's crucial to eat when you have the greatest capacity to digest what you've eaten. Having grown up eating a

heavier dinner, and having struggled with many digestive problems for years, the practice of making lunch my largest meal has greatly improved my digestion.



Exercise before breakfast or dinner for the best results.

Ayurveda recommends you exercise on an empty stomach, so in the morning before breakfast or in the late afternoon before dinner are the best times. You're at risk for developing any of 80 vata-dosha-related diseases (see [here](#)) when you exercise right after eating.

Exercise helps provide stability to your body, rids you of excess fat, increases your ability to do hard work, and promotes healthy digestion — when done at the proper time, in the proper quantity, with respect to guidelines for overdoing it and seasonal considerations. You want to find a balance between exercising enough but not too much that it harms you. Signs of imbalance include cracking joints, pain anywhere in your body, and exhaustion from overexercising, so it's important to follow Ayurveda's exercise guidelines. My joint cracking, pain, and

tiredness have dramatically reduced since I started exercising the right amount at the right time.

According to the Ayurvedic texts, the signs of over-exercising are:

- Having a really dry mouth
- Breathing from your mouth
- Sweating excessively

See the following chapter for when it's best to do heavier versus lighter forms of exercise, and examples.

In addition to paying attention to when and how much you exercise, consider how much sound accompanies your workout. Too much sound aggravates the vata dosha, which is already increased through exercise. Silence is one of the best ways to balance vata. Ayurveda advises against talking while working out, so if you want some type of sound, try listening to relatively calm music (ideally a nature soundtrack).



WHAT IF YOU'RE MENSTRUATING?

Ayurveda recommends stopping all exercise during your period. Vata dosha is naturally increased with the movement of blood during menses. Exercising further increases vata, and the most obvious signs of excess vata are cramps and pain. When I started resting more during my periods, I noticed the huge difference it

made in reducing my cramps. Resting as much as you can during your period supports your body's natural process of menstruating, which Ayurveda believes helps prevent future menopause symptoms.



Shower well.



Showering every day is considered extremely healthy. The Ayurvedic text *Ashtanga Hridayam* reveals: “Improvement of appetite, sexual vigor, lifespan, enthusiasm, and strength are the

advantages of bathing. Moreover, bathing eliminates itching, dirt, exhaustion, sweat, stupor, thirst, and burning sensations.” That’s right: you can start showering your way to more enthusiasm, better appetite, enhanced libido, and more strength, among other awesome benefits.

The most ideal time to shower is after you’ve eliminated in the morning. The next best time to shower is before eating dinner, if you’re unable to shower in the morning or feel the need for a second shower. Never shower right after eating because it disturbs digestion. This can eventually create digestive and other types of health challenges when done habitually.

The heart, head, and eyes are considered sensitive areas of the body, so use cool to lukewarm water on these parts. You can wash the rest of your body with warm to hot water. **Note:** If you have hyperacidity or have vomited recently, don’t shower with hot water. Use lukewarm or cool water instead.

Use green mung dal flour, which won’t dry out your skin like regular soap. See [Resources](#) for where you can find it and check out [chapter 3](#) for body care recipes.



WHEN NOT TO SHOWER

Avoid showering if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Active indigestion
- Diarrhea

- Fever
 - Flu
 - Cold
 - Cough
-



Don't suppress your natural urges.

Ayurveda is all about addressing the root causes of why you manifest health challenges. The suppression of natural urges is a common cause of imbalance in my clients. Here are the 13 natural urges Ayurveda warns against holding back:

- Urine
- Bowels
- Gas
- Vomiting
- Sneezing
- Burping
- Yawning

- Hunger
- Thirst
- Tears
- Sleep
- Ejaculation
- Increased breathing

When you suppress sneezing regularly, Ayurvedic texts say it can lead to facial paralysis and headaches. Holding the urge to pee can cause urinary stones. Not sleeping enough for long periods of time can cause you to feel pain all over your body. You can avoid all of this by expressing your natural urges.

I grew up believing that “big girls don’t cry.” I wanted to be a “big girl,” so I used to always hold it all in. I was amazed, yet not surprised, to learn how suppressing tears is a root cause of anorexia nervosa. When you hold back tears, the issues that provoked them become much bigger than they need to be. Had I let the river flow, so to speak, the emotions could have simply come and passed away, much as waves rise and fall. Your emotions can more easily wash over you if you allow them full expression. Adults have a lot to learn from children in this regard. Small children cry loudly and intensely when they’re upset, only to let go of their emotions and move on within a relatively short span of time. You can do this, too, by allowing expression of tears and all the other 12 natural urges.

If you’re in a public place and don’t want to express a natural urge, simply excuse yourself for a moment and step away into a more private place. Your health will thank you.



Have the most productive meetings and make your best decisions between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

The pitta dosha is active between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., at which time you have the greatest ability to process, analyze, and synthesize information in a clear, sharp way. Because of pitta's ability to help you see clearly and act intelligently, you can make the best possible decisions at this time. Are you in the process of selecting a house? Choosing a life partner? A business partner? Deciding on an important investment to add to your portfolio? Ayurveda recommends you make your most important decisions during this time. I personally feel I'm most focused and productive at this time.



Do grounding activities between 6
and 10 p.m. to promote sound
sleep.



Modern studies are now proving what Ayurveda has been saying for thousands of years: it's important to wind down your day with grounding practices. Between 6 and 10 p.m. (when kapha dosha is

active), spend time reading books, socializing with people or pets, going for an evening walk, writing in your journal, practicing meditation, or doing any other activities that give you calmness and peace of mind.

Unplugging from your computer and refraining from talking and texting on your phone after 8 p.m. will help you get into a good frame of mind to sleep. Too much noise before sleeping activates your mind, making it harder to have the healthy inertia that sound sleep requires. A main cause of insomnia is stress, so avoid anything stressful for a couple of hours prior to bedtime to ensure good quality sleep.

It's also helpful to oil the soles of your feet, the top of your head, and the backs of your ears before sleeping (see [instructions for oiling](#)). This promotes sound sleep, helps combat stress, and even counteracts the aging process.

PRACTICING THE AYURVEDA WAY

“Oiling the feet, ears, and head helps you go into such a nice, deep sleep, and you wake up feeling really refreshed.”

— Regina



Have better sex at nighttime.

Sex is one of the three pillars of health in Ayurveda. Following these guidelines, as well as the seasonal ones outlined in the next chapter (see [here](#)), promotes good overall health and ensures you're able to enjoy sex as much as possible.

It's natural to want to sleep after having sex, which is why Ayurveda recommends having sex at night before sleeping. It's also important that you and your partner are free from the urges of hunger, urine, and thirst, and that you have eaten, but not too much (as sex is like exercise, you'll feel uncomfortable if you do either on a full stomach; it's best to wait at least 2 hours after eating dinner).

Ayurveda recommends anointing yourself with fragrances and cosmetics prior to sex, to engage all of your senses. After having sex and prior to sleeping, Ayurveda recommends taking a warm bath, wearing fresh clothes, eating meat soup or drinking warm milk with sugar, and exposing yourself to moonlight. All these activities help rejuvenate your body after the exertion of sexual activity.



FEED YOUR LIBIDO

Did you know that certain aphrodisiac foods build sexual tissues, increasing your fertility and ensuring that you're strong enough to enjoy sex? These include milk, wheat, ghee, sugar, white rice, urad dal, goat meat soup, and honey.

There are also certain conditions in which Ayurveda does not recommend having sex. These include:

- When a woman is on her period
- After having just eaten a heavy meal
- When either partner is unwell
- When either partner feels too weak
- If either partner suffers from diseases related to the sexual organs
- The last trimester of pregnancy, 3 months past natural childbirth, and at least 3 months after surgical childbirth



HEALTHY SEX FOR GOOD OVERALL HEALTH

Here are some benefits of healthy sexual activity as stated in the Ayurvedic texts:

- Good memory
 - Intelligence
 - A long life
 - Health
 - Nourishment
 - Sharp sense organs
 - Strength
 - Slower aging
-



Sleep by 10 p.m. so you can rise by 6 a.m. for optimal sleep and overall

health.

“Early to bed, early to rise” is not only a common colloquial expression. It’s also an important insomnia solution. According to Ayurveda, it’s easiest to fall asleep by 10 p.m. and wake up by 6 a.m. Doing so is an excellent way to live in greater overall harmony with the natural cycles of day and night. Waking up early also helps you sleep more easily at the right time at night. And conversely, sleeping by 10 p.m. is very helpful for waking up early.

Do you feel pain all over your body? Experience excess drowsiness and find yourself yawning day in and day out? Have a heavy head? Feel like you simply don’t want to do anything much of the time? These are all signs that you may not be sleeping enough.

Sleep is considered one of the three pillars of health in Ayurveda. Healthy digestion and healthy physiological, psychological, and neurological functioning each depend upon getting enough quality sleep at night. Not getting adequate sleep can lead to a regular feeling of lethargy, laziness, memory loss, infertility, and even intellect loss and psychiatric problems, according to Ayurvedic texts.



STRATEGIES FOR GETTING BETTER SLEEP

- [Wake up between 4 and 6 a.m.](#)

- Drink spiced milk before sleeping.
 - Oil your feet, the top of your head, and the backs of your ears before sleeping.
 - Turn off your phone and computer after 8 p.m.
 - Do grounding activities like walking, journaling, and listening to natural music in evenings.
 - Practice udgeeth breathing.
 - Go to sleep by 10 p.m.
-



My Day, with Ayurveda

Here's how I normally structure my day. Pick and choose what works for you, refer back to their descriptions, and then integrate them into your day. Start small and keep in mind that what you do consistently matters more than what you do only occasionally.

FIRST THING IN THE MORNING

Wake up early ([Chapter 7, here](#))

Eliminate ([Chapter 1, here](#))

Drink warm water soon after waking up ([Chapter 8, here](#))

Brush teeth with a natural toothpaste ([Chapter 8, here](#))

Do oil pulling ([Chapter 8, here](#))

MORNING SPIRITUAL PRACTICES (PICK AND CHOOSE)

Honor the sun ([Chapter 7, here](#))

Let go of negative thoughts and emotions with a special water practice ([Chapter 7, here](#))

Chant inspiring mantras ([Chapter 7, here](#))

Nourish your heart with the sound of OM ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Practice buzzing bee breathing exercise ([Chapter 5, here](#))

Practice Sun meditation ([Chapter 7, here](#))

Experience the power of letting go ([Chapter 5, here](#))

Find inner stability in Tree Pose ([Chapter 5, here](#))

Reclaim your power in Cobra Pose ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Practice evoking the sun as a friend of all ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Practice natural yoga poses to connect your body, mind, and spirit ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Connect with the unconditionally loving spirit of a dog in Downward-Facing Dog Pose ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Go for a walk or do some other form of exercise ([Chapter 8, here](#))

FINISH YOUR MORNING ROUTINE

Oil your body ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Take a shower ([Chapter 8, here](#))

Use green mung dal as a soap substitute ([Chapter 3, here](#))

Eat a warm breakfast between 7 and 9 a.m.

START WORK

Do your hardest work and make your most important decisions between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. ([Chapter 8, here](#))

Take a lunch break around noon ([Chapter 8, here](#))

Exercise before dinner if desired (second best time of day to exercise) ([Chapter 8, here](#))

Oil your body before dinner if desired (second best time to oil) ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Shower before dinner if needed (second best time to shower) ([Chapter 8, here](#))

EVENING ROUTINE

Eat dinner between 5 and 7 p.m. ([Chapter 8, here](#))

Have better sex at night (follow seasonal guidelines) (Chapter 8 and 9, [page 198](#) and [page 218](#))

Brush your teeth with a natural toothpaste ([Chapter 8, here](#))

Oil the top of your head, ears, and feet before sleeping ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Nourish your heart with the sound of OM right before sleeping ([Chapter 6, here](#))

Practice buzzing bee breathing exercise ([Chapter 5, here](#))

Go to sleep by 10 p.m. ([Chapter 8, here](#))



CHAPTER 9

Seasonal Strategies to Live in Harmony with Nature

One of my favorite things about living Ayurveda is how the strategies for finding harmony with nature change throughout the year. I used to blindly follow the same protocols for food, work, and exercise all year, but with Ayurveda's seasonal guidelines, I enjoy the variety of approaches and am much more in touch with the changes in nature and in my own body and mind. Ayurveda is like an amazing compass with which to navigate and plan my year.



Ayurveda outlines six distinct seasons per year. These specific seasons follow the natural pattern of the three *doshas* as they build up, peak, and then dissipate throughout the year. Following a seasonal Ayurvedic regimen not only keeps you healthy during each current season, but it also prepares your body for the following season. Here's how the doshas flow through the seasons:

- **Late Winter** (January 14–March 14): Kapha dosha builds up; excellent health
- **Spring** (March 14–May 14): Kapha dosha peaks
- **Early Summer** (May 14–July 14): Vata dosha builds up
- **Late Summer** (July 14–September 14): Vata dosha peaks and pitta dosha builds up; worst health
- **Fall** (September 14–November 14): Pitta dosha peaks
- **Early Winter** (November 14–January 14): No doshas are peaking or building up; best health

I used to eagerly look forward to summer, but now I most look forward to greeting early winter. Because none of the bioforces are peaking, or even building up, it's considered the time of best health. Everything within your body and without is in its most natural state of harmony. Your digestion is strongest in wintertime, giving you the best opportunity for physical strength, and allowing you to enjoy heavier holiday meals and larger meals in general. Because it's cold outside, your inner fire increases to help you adapt (your body's natural homeostasis response).

In summer, since there's so much heat outside, your body's inner fire reduces to help you stay balanced with the atmosphere. I look forward to carving out adequate time for rest and rejuvenation in late summer, since digestion is weakest then. I enjoy eating light, easily digestible, moist foods in the summer, and smaller quantities of food.

Each season brings you different opportunities to take health into your own hands. In Ayurveda, the collection of recommended seasonal behaviors is called *ritucharya* (*ritu* translates as “season” and *charya* means “behavior”). Knowing about *ritucharya* and following the guidance in this chapter has made a huge difference in my own health, and that of my clients and students. It’s so empowering to finally know what to do when — and why.

The guidelines that follow are given to protect the health of those who are relatively healthy. If you are suffering from imbalances and diseases, you should still keep seasonal guidance in mind, but I recommend also making an appointment with a qualified Ayurveda practitioner to receive customized guidance.



Benefit from Ayurveda's concept of six tastes as they relate to the seasons.

Ayurveda classifies seasonal foods according to their tastes and qualities. There are six tastes in Ayurveda — the five that are acknowledged by the Western perspective (sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and pungent/spicy) plus the astringent taste (a walnut is astringent). These six tastes correspond with each element, as well as each dosha.

The sweet taste is composed of the earth and water elements and is associated with the kapha dosha. When you eat more sweets, the amount of kapha in your body and mind increases. Spring is the

only season in which Ayurveda discourages having the sweet taste because of the large amount of kapha in the atmosphere during this time of the year. We all know cookies, cakes, and fruits contain the sweet taste in abundant quantities, but in Ayurveda, sweet does not necessarily equal sugar. When you have foods with the sweet taste in a digestible portion, they're excellent immunity builders, giving your body strength and fertility. How nice, to enjoy sweetness guilt-free!

Examples of the sweet taste: many fresh fruits, ghee, milk, rice, wheat, cucumbers, squash, pumpkin, masoor lentil, green gram mung lentil, black gram lentil (urad dal), dates, almonds, cashews, coconuts (and coconut oil), fish, lamb, pork, beef, goat meat, potatoes, okra, cardamom, fennel, rock candy, and sugar.

The salty taste is made of fire and water. The fire in salt increases pitta dosha, and its water increases kapha dosha. It's best to eat less of the salty taste in fall, when pitta dosha is naturally high, and in the spring, when kapha is predominant. It's great at all other times of year. The salty taste adds heat to your body and aids digestion, food absorption, and elimination when consumed in the appropriate quantity.

Not all salt is the same! Learn why Ayurveda recommends Himalayan pink rock salt, [here](#).

The sour taste is a combination of the fire and earth elements. This taste, like saltiness, increases pitta and kapha doshas. Eat less of the sour taste in the fall and spring, and enjoy it all other times of the year. Sourness creates the sensation of taste on your tongue and has a great laxative effect.

Examples of the sour taste: tomatoes, many fruits (especially citrus, berries, and pomegranates), lemon, lime, some pickles, and

tamarind.

The bitter taste is one of our favorite medicinal tastes in Ayurveda. It cleanses your tongue of everything you've tasted before and is especially helpful if you're trying to digest toxins; the bitter taste clears bodily channels. It's great if you suffer from blood disorders, itching, infections, fever, or parasites. The bitter taste is dominant in the air and space elements. It increases vata dosha. Ayurveda recommends more intake of the bitter taste during the spring and fall, when kapha and pitta, respectively, are predominant in the atmosphere.

Examples of the bitter taste: fenugreek leaves and seeds, bittermelon, dandelion roots, peas, spinach (also sweet), carrots (also sweet), many green vegetables, turmeric, fennel, and saffron.

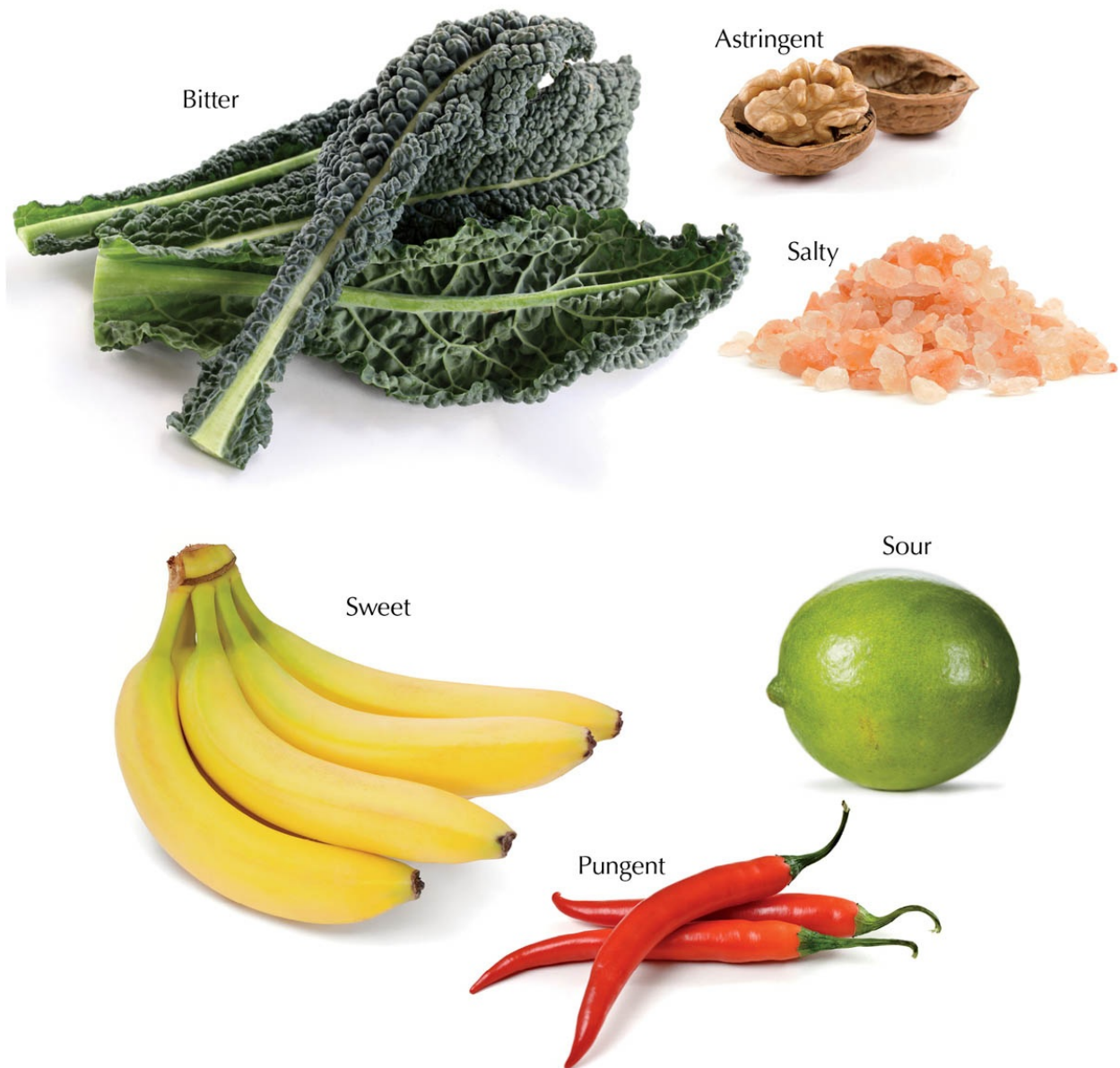
The pungent taste has fire and air. Spiciness increases vata and pitta doshas. Because of the fire element in spiciness, this taste, in moderation, promotes digestion and opens your lungs in cases of cough, colds, and congestion. The only time of year this taste is actively recommended is spring, when the heavy, cold, and sweet earth and water elements rule. Spicy food is not as harmful during winter (especially if you suffer from congestion) as it is in summer and fall, when you should definitely reduce or avoid this taste, so as not to overheat.

Examples of the pungent taste: red chilies, green chilies, wasabi, black pepper, hing, raw garlic, ginger, radish, mustard, all kinds of peppers, ajwain seeds, fenugreek seeds, and mustard oil.

The astringent taste isn't easy to identify independently, but it is dominant in the air and earth elements. Because the earth element

is subtle, it increases only vata dosha. It's an excellent taste to have in moderation to dry your body and close the flow when you have excess bleeding or diarrhea. Like the other five tastes, it helps to keep your diet balanced. Ayurveda recommends enjoying more of the astringent taste in the fall and spring seasons.

Examples of the astringent taste: unripe bananas, pomegranates, green beans, barley, black gram lentils (urad dal), green whole or split mung dal, toor dal (lentil), sorghum, peanuts, safflower seeds, walnuts, honey, chicken, rabbit, water chestnuts, pumpkin, drumsticks, apples, pears, coriander, and nutmeg.



Seasonal Food Guide

SEASON	TASTES TO ENJOY	SEASONAL FOOD IDEAS
Late Winter (January 14–March 14)	Sweet Salty Sour	Eat larger food quantity; favor heavier foods like spiced milk, more ghee, wheat, nuts, seasonal fruits, goat meat, black gram lentil (urad dal), and goat cheese
Spring (March 14–May 14)	Bitter Pungent Astringent	Have lighter foods, in smaller quantities, and use less oil/ghee (can use mustard oil to cook); favor green vegetables, peppers, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, gourds, green mung dal, beans, hot water, more spices, raw onions, honey, and barley; avoid fruit
Early Summer (May 14–July 14)	Sweet Sour Salty	Eat smaller food quantity, use less oil/ghee; favor soups (especially mung dal soup), squashes, cucumbers, cilantro/coriander, coconut water, pomegranate, grapes, rice, sweet seasonal fruits, and fruit juices
Late Summer (July 14–September 14)	Sweet Sour Salty	Eat smaller food quantity, use less oil/ghee; favor light soups, green mung dal, gourds, squashes, carrots, puffed rice, peaches, plums, raisins, and blackberries
Fall (September 14–November 14)	Sweet Bitter Astringent	Favor pomegranate, wheat, rice, barley, green mung dal, bitter and green vegetables, squashes, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, green beans, asparagus, okra, ghee, sugar, dates, takra with sugar, and sweet well-

ripened fruit; avoid sour fruit and all fermented foods

Early Winter
(November
14–January
14)

Sweet

Sour

Salty

Eat larger food quantity; favor heavier foods, like sooji cereal, dates, all nuts, meats, spiced milk, more ghee, fresh cheeses, wheat, seasonal fruits, sweet cakes, and pies



Eat your way to good health
throughout the year.



It's wonderful that Thanksgiving and Christmas fall during the winter, as that's the best time, according to Ayurveda, to enjoy rich, luxurious food. I always look forward to the food I can enjoy in the wintertime, especially the delicious entrées prepared by Chef Sanjai for the Vedika Global community.



Make the most of your workout throughout the year.

Exercise, discussed [here](#), is something we're told to do for good health yearlong. In Ayurveda, however, the type, duration, and intensity of your ideal exercise change throughout the year.

In the summer season, when you're already receiving heat and intensity from the sun, intense workouts aren't a good idea. When you exercise a lot in the summertime, you can easily overheat and become exhausted. In summer, your digestive capacity is a lot lower, so you don't want to eat as much. When you don't eat a lot, you naturally don't feel as energetic. In the winter, however, because your digestion is so strong, you can more easily replenish your body with plenty of rich, heavy, nourishing foods after working out. That, in turn, gives you the energy to work out more.

In the summer and fall, you can enjoy more relaxing forms of exercise, like restorative yoga classes and poses that are still and meditative. This is the time to enjoy walks in nature. You can also do gentler forms of exercise, such as tai chi, less intense Pilates workouts, and swimming.

In winter and spring, you can go all out with exercise. Enjoy vigorous workouts. You can do more cardio-intensive exercises, lift weights, play sports, run marathons, incorporate more poses into your morning yoga routine, and do fun winter sports like ice skating, skiing, and snowboarding.



TIPS FOR MARATHON RUNNERS

Late spring (April or early May) would be a perfect time to schedule a marathon. You can start with less-intense runs in the fall and work your way up to the marathon in the winter and spring, when it's helpful to get more vigorous exercise.

Try cross-training in summer, perhaps swimming and yoga, to tone your muscles and protect your physical strength for when you'll need it most.



Drink seasonally
appropriate beverages.



Like with food, the beverages that you benefit from the most change with the seasons.

To drink hot water or not? That is the question. Hot water is great in the colder winter months. It's also excellent in spring, when kapha dosha, with its heavy, sticky, sweet qualities, is everywhere, within and around you. In the warmer months of summer and fall, when vata and pitta doshas are more active, it's helpful to drink boiled water after it has cooled down to a drinkable level. This is true anytime you experience burning sensations and feel hot physically. (Ice-cold water is never recommended, as it is not helpful for digestion; see [here](#).)

Enjoy homemade juice in the summer and fall. I love the fresh, rejuvenating effect that juice has on my mind and body. Ayurveda encourages you to make your own juice by squeezing your favorite fruits and drinking them fresh. Store-bought juices contain many more fruits than you would ever want — or need — in a single day. You can dilute store-bought juice with water to make it lighter, but it's really best to make your own. By making fresh juice, you are practicing self-love, taking the time, attention, and care you need to nourish yourself. So much of living Ayurveda is about opening your heart to loving yourself enough to create the health and life you deserve.

Make soothing mango and rose lassis in summer and fall. To make a mango lassi, combine $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plain whole organic yogurt, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh ripe mango pulp, and 1 cup boiled and cooled water in a large glass or a small bowl and churn with a whisk or process in a blender. Add organic sugar to taste.

To make a rose lassi, blend $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plain whole organic yogurt, 1 cup water, 1 to 3 teaspoons organic sugar, and rose water (or fresh ground rose petals) in a blender and blend until smooth. Happy lassi drinking!



The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of Alcohol

QUESTIONS

ANSWERS

Who?

Consult a practitioner to find out what's best for you. Red wine can be helpful for balancing excess vata dosha in some people. Those with excess pitta dosha may be advised against alcohol, or to only drink sweet wines.

What kind?

Wine is the most beneficial alcohol type in Ayurveda. Those with more vata and pitta can enjoy sweeter wines, like dessert wines, while those with more kapha can have more astringent-tasting or spiced, aged wines. Medicinal wines need to be prepared and prescribed by a qualified Ayurvedic professional.

When can I drink more?

The best time for wine is in the winter months, when you're at the peak of health.

Where?

Drink in a clean, inspiring place where alcohol is ideally not the main attraction, but simply a nice enhancement.

Why?

Wine has many flavors that can enhance a meal, and you may feel good while drinking it.

Wine made with jaggery, along with sweet and sour wines, can enhance your digestion.

How much?

As with all things Ayurveda, moderation is key. A glass or two is great.

With what?

Wine consumed for pleasure should be taken with heartier food or a meal that is not overly spicy. Wine consumed medicinally will come with instructions from your practitioner.



Concentrate your weight-loss efforts in the spring for lasting results.

To burn through the layers of fat in your body, Ayurveda teaches that you need a good amount of fire. Two of the best ways to increase the fire already in your body are:

- Cranking up your exercise duration and/or intensity level
- Eating spicier foods

Spring is the best time to exercise as much as possible and eat spicier foods. This is because the heavy earth and water elements associated with kapha dosha are more prevalent in the atmosphere. You'll stay most balanced by doing what you can to counteract the natural heaviness in the environment by building your inner fire through exercise, eating less food, and eating a more heating diet.

Because there's already so much heat in summer, this isn't an effective time to lose weight. When you try achieving "the perfect bikini body" in the summer, with intense exercise and heating foods, you can easily overheat. This could potentially lead to conditions like heartburn, hyperacidity, and other heat-related problems. Losing weight during this time is not worth the risks. The good news is that Ayurveda recommends a lighter diet during the summer and fall, so the weight you take off in springtime won't easily come back later.

In the winter, because your digestive fire is so naturally strong, it's important to feed it well, but it's also important to exercise heavily at this time, so you won't necessarily gain weight. In other words, the best weight-loss strategy recommended by Ayurveda is to take the weight off in springtime and then keep it off during the rest of the year.



Conceive during wintertime to create the healthiest baby possible.

The winter season, from November through March, is best for conception, according to Ayurveda. You're at your strongest during this time, and sex, like exercise, requires a lot of strength and energy to be effective. Immunity is also the strongest during the wintertime. Immunity and fertility are connected: The more immunity you have, the healthier you are, and the better the chances you'll deliver a strong, healthy baby.

Regardless of whether you are trying to conceive, Ayurveda recommends having sex more often in the winter and spring and less often in the summer and fall. Doing it more during the colder seasons heats up your body and helps you stay in balance with nature. Too much sex in summer and fall can burn, exhaust, and deplete vital sexual fluids, which are the same fluids that create overall health in your body. Your sexual tissue lives in every cell of your body. It's an essential ingredient for good overall health.

Eat, drink, and be merry! This is the best way to summarize Ayurveda's winter recommendations.



Take advantage of the natural focus the fall season provides to launch a successful new venture.

Fall is the best time to launch a new venture — whether a new business or a new project at your workplace — because this is when pitta dosha is naturally high, giving you focus, clarity, intelligent strategic thinking, and planning abilities. I launched my Ayurveda practice in the fall for this reason. Fall is the harvest season when we start ventures. I spent a lot of time before fall thinking about how I wanted to structure my work, how I wanted to connect with people through it, and what strategies I wanted to use to make a difference with Ayurveda.

The fall season also brings illuminating Vedic holidays such as Diwali, the Vedic festival of light. This festival celebrates the victory of the light of knowledge over the darkness of ignorance and the illusions we unconsciously carry around within us. It occurs sometime between September and November and is considered a very auspicious time to launch new ventures with a blast of positivity.

Another nice thing about launching ventures in the fall is that you have the energy to work really hard throughout the winter and

spring. By the time summer rolls around, you can afford to schedule downtime, which creates a window of receptivity for great inspiration of ways to improve your project or for new ideas to explore.



Plan active vacations for winter and retreats for summer.

I was surprised at first to learn that Ayurveda recommends traveling more in winter. Having grown up and lived in a colder part of the world (the midwestern United States), I loved summer and looked forward to the freedom and joy I associated with it. Now, as an Ayurveda practitioner, I anticipate wintertime with the same eagerness I once reserved for summer.

When you follow Ayurveda's seasonal health guidelines, you'll be at your healthiest in winter, which means you'll have the greatest freedom in what to eat, how far to travel, and what kinds of activities to partake in. Wintertime is definitely the best time to travel. You can go on adventures that take you to multiple destinations and enjoy all the outdoor activities and excursions your travel destination offers.

Summer is still a great vacation time, but it's best to go where you can remain in one location. Summer vacations are great opportunities to have retreat-like experiences, where you can relax, reflect, and conserve energy by spending more time in quiet contemplation and meditation. Silence has a profoundly calming effect on vata dosha, which is naturally active during summertime. Also during this time, take care to ensure you don't have to travel too much via plane, train, car, bus, or other transportation. This is the time to pull inward.

Enjoy going wherever your heart desires. When you plan accordingly, you'll be able to make the most out of your next vacation.



A DREAMLIKE SUMMER RETREAT

Ayurvedic sages recommend staying in cool places in summer where you can visit gardens and be near water. This is poetically expressed in *Ashtanga Hrdayam*:

Spend time in houses around which bunches of flowers and grapes are hanging from their creepers, sheets of cloth spreading sweet scented water are arranged to fan the air, bunches of tender leaves and mango leaves hanging all around. Sleep on a soft bed prepared with beautiful flowers. Spend the long summer days remaining inside houses that have fully blossomed flowers

*suspended all around, that are cooled by water fountains
with water scented by fragrant herbs.*

Isn't that beautiful?



Prevent seasonal colds and coughs.



It's easy to catch colds and start coughing and sneezing a lot in spring. The water and earth elements of kapha dosha are dominant in the atmosphere and get secreted from your body through mucus

and phlegm. Because coldness is a quality of kapha dosha, do what you can to heat your body (remember: like increases like, so we want opposing qualities when the aim is reduction). This wisdom holds true anytime you feel vulnerable to getting a cold or cough.

Eat food with more spices. Spring is a time to enjoy different spices that may be too heating during the summer and fall seasons. I love adding garlic, ginger, mustard seeds, ajwain seeds, fenugreek seeds, some black pepper, garam masala, and other warming spices to my food during spring and wintertime, and anytime I notice signs of a cold or cough.

Avoid sweets. It's very important to eat less of the sweet taste in springtime when kapha is prevalent — and eliminate sweets anytime you feel prone to colds and coughs. Sweet food contains the earth and water elements, both of which increase kapha dosha in your body. Colds and coughs are signs of excess kapha dosha in your system. By reducing sweets, you're reducing the amount of kapha buildup in your body.

I remember initially feeling disappointed I had to give up sweets for a whole season, but I find it's worth temporarily putting them away to stay healthy. The best part is that I enjoy the sweets a lot more when I'm able to eat them.

Here are some other recommendations that will help you prevent spring colds:

- Try dry scrubbing (see [here](#)).
- Don't take naps (see [here](#)).
- Take steps to prevent constipation (see [chapter 1](#)).
- Add 4 or 5 tulsi leaves to your tea each morning or cook them in your food.

- Don't use air conditioning in your home or car, even on warm spring days.
- Avoid excess spring sun exposure.
- Avoid cold food and beverages.



Try dry scrubbing to support weight loss.



masoor lentils



triphala



neem

Oiling (see [here](#) for instructions) is recommended any time of year. However, if you feel congested after applying oil, are gaining

weight, or find you have allergies in springtime, try using a dry body scrub instead. Grind 3 cups masoor lentils very finely. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup neem powder and 2 cups triphala herb powder to the masoor lentil mix. If you're feeling adventurous, try adding one of these powders: tulsi leaf, turmeric, vetiver, green gram, or haritaki. Use your hands to rub a handful onto your skin in the bathtub, then shower and rinse it off. This scrub helps improve your circulation and supports weight loss by removing fat deposits (cellulite) and dead skin cells.



Enjoy dressing for the seasons.



Protect yourself from the cold with wool. It's especially important to protect your head and ears during harsh, cold winters. Even in

milder climates, cool winds can easily enter your ear canal, disturbing vata dosha, so keep a scarf handy to cover up.

In summertime, wear loose-fitting, ideally white or light-colored clothing, with white pearls, hats, and sunglasses. Pearls are recommended because they're soothing and cooling, particularly if you have burning or heat-related conditions such as heartburn, hyperacidity, or shingles. White and light-colored clothing is not only a practical way to protect yourself from the intensity of the summer heat, it also promotes mental peace, optimism, clarity, and all of the other qualities associated with sattva and a peaceful mind (see [here](#)).

All year round, wear fresh clothes and maybe even spray yourself with aromatic perfumes or wear flower garlands to help you feel fresh and clear-headed throughout the day. Wear brightly colored clothes to feel inspired and uplifted, and to attract good vibes.



Nap according to the seasons to promote sound sleep habits.

The only season in which Ayurveda recommends napping is early summer, when the atmosphere is very dry and the sun is the

strongest. Just a 30-minute afternoon nap, at least 1 hour after lunch, replenishes your body with much-needed moisture. I find that taking naps in summer is rejuvenating and helps refresh my perspective.

During the rest of the year, there's more moisture in the atmosphere, so when you sleep, your digestive fire also goes to sleep. Since digestion is so crucial for good health, you don't want this to happen! Hence, if you're tired, Ayurveda recommends sitting and reclining back slightly while closing your eyes for about 30 minutes. This prevents your digestive fire from sleeping, while allowing you to rest. I like doing this on days I haven't been able to sleep as much the previous night, such as when I've taken overnight flights.

Exceptions to the no-napping rule include pregnant and postnatal women, babies and small children, and the elderly. It also includes those who are exhausted from travel, work, studying, sexual activity, or exercise, and those who have stayed up all night. Ayurveda recommends you sleep for half the time you missed at night. If you normally sleep 8 hours and missed 5 hours of sleep the previous night, you're able to sleep 2.5 extra hours during the day (anytime after 6 a.m.).



Absorb the moon's medicine.

As a modern, globalized society, we've lost touch with the movements and healing aspects of the sun, moon, and wind. Ayurveda urges you to return to nature and benefit from nature's subtle medicine. Natural elements are always at play around you and are more accessible than you often realize.

Whereas pitta dosha is connected with the sun and its metabolizing heat and intensity, the moon is associated with kapha dosha, which is made of the earth and water elements. Kapha dosha is naturally stable, soothing, cool, calm, nurturing, and grounding.

Ayurvedic sages recommend you go outside to absorb the moonlight in fall, when a lot of pitta dosha is present. Those suffering from excess heat, whether physically or mentally (from too much stress or having to meet many tight deadlines), can particularly benefit from the moon's soothing, maternal medicine.

The Vedic holiday Sharad Purnima is on the most powerful full moon of the year, when the moon is closest to earth. On this fall night, as my teacher revealed, "It's believed in Ayurveda that exposure to the moon's rays is very helpful in mitigating the adverse effects of excess pitta dosha, including many kinds of digestive, blood, skin, lymph, and heat disorders, throughout the season." I have fond memories of getting together with my Ayurveda classmates to soak in the moonlight. It felt like we were in on some special secrets of nature. I remember how much of a difference it made one year in particular in improving a heat-related condition I had been struggling with. But don't take my word for it. Get out in the moonlight and experience the healing and subtle power of moon medicine for yourself.



Mind Quiz

Take this quiz to discover your mind's most dominant qualities. Don't worry if it's not all sattva! The journey from tamas to rajas to sattva is ongoing. It's fun to take and re-take this quiz as a quick way to see how you're progressing. All the practices in this book build your natural sattva.

QUESTIONS

1. What do you eat?

2. How easily do you forgive others?

3. How's your sleep?

ANSWERS

a) I eat mostly fresh, light, easily digestible foods

b) I eat a big variety of food and lots of spicy foods

c) I eat a lot of meat, fast food, and leftovers; I constantly crave food

a) I forgive other easily and completely

b) I forgive others with a lot of effort; I often plan revenge

c) I hold onto grudges

a) I sleep soundly and awaken refreshed

b) I have disturbed and interrupted sleep

c) I sleep deeply and never want to awaken

4. How do you speak?

a) I speak clearly, calmly, firmly

b) I get excited, passionate, argumentative

c) I have a hard time expressing myself

5. What's your day usually like?

a) I am creative, productive, pace myself well, and try to help others

b) I am passionate, competitive, and feel very driven

c) I procrastinate a lot and have trouble getting things done

Which category does your mind mostly fall into?

Mostly a answers: sattva

Mostly b answers: rajas

Mostly c answers: tamas

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is said that when a student is ready, the teacher appears. My deep gratitude to:

My teacher, my Guru, Acharya Shunya, for appearing in my life, for lighting a lamp of hope and transformation in my heart, and for inspiring every page of this book.

My editor, Sarah Guare, whose heartfelt desire to learn Ayurveda in an accessible way manifested this book. Thank you for discovering me online, and for asking me to pass on some of what I have been blessed to learn, and for excellent editing.

Chef Sanjai for transforming food from being my worst enemy into my best friend. Daya Prakash Sinha, Tata ji, for believing in me. Dr. Abhijit Jinde, Dr. Mahesh Sabade, and Dr. Mandar Bedekar for deepening my understanding of Ayurveda. My parents, Prakash and Rita Ajmera, and my sister Nikita for supporting me in walking the Ayurveda way. Kosha Banker for reconnecting me with our Ayurveda family lineage. Vimala Brady for excellent editing and fact checking. Lakshmi Tracy Cunningham for big sisterly support from day one.

The entire Storey Publishing team for such a joy-filled publishing experience. Deborah, Alee, Sarah Armour, and Emily for your amazing support in ensuring as many people as possible can benefit from the Ayurveda way. Michaela, Mars, Liz, Shannon, and Kelly for making the book look so beautiful. Special thanks to Mars and Alethea for opening up your home.

My agent Lisa DiMona for amazing, steadfast guidance. Julie Moon for excellent editing and book organization. Somik Raha for connecting me with my Guru and insisting I write. Susan Davis,

Trish Sanders, Sister Mary Ann Culpert, Shirley Arnold, and Leslie Witherell for supporting my wellness journey.

Thank you all from the depths of my heart.



ABOVE: *Chef Sanjai*



ABOVE: *My Guru, Acharya Shunya*

RESOURCES

This section contains a list of places where you can purchase the herbs, spices, oils, and foods mentioned in this book, along with resources for additional Ayurveda education.

Healing Herb & Food Suppliers

Ancient Organics

510-280-5043

ancientorganics.com

Ancient Organics makes excellent ghee. Visit their website to find a store near you where it is available. Online ordering is also possible.

Athreya

323-909-2981

letsallbehealthy.com

A wonderful resource for organic herbs and spices, oils, beauty care products, tooth powders, and mouthwashes.

Auromère Ayurvedic Imports

800-735-4691

auromere.com

Fabulous Ayurvedic herbal toothpastes, oils, and shampoos available online as well as in many natural food stores and yoga studios.

Banyan Botanicals

800-953-6424

www.banyanbotanicals.com

Order your own kitchari kit (equipped with rice, mung lentil, a spice mix, and organic ghee) here! They also have a good selection of herbs and spices.

Bulk Apothecary

888-728-7612

bulkapothecary.com

Provides organic herbs and spices.

Himalaya Herbal Healthcare

800-869-4640

himalayausa.com

A great source of Ayurvedic herbs and herb-infused shampoos, face washes, and toothpastes.

Laavanya

650-533-9915

laavanyaluxury.com

Supplies Ayurveda beauty products made by my friend and fellow Vedika Global graduate Shweta Upadhyaya.

Lhasa Karnak

510-548-0380

www.herb-inc.com

They sell herbs and oils at two stores in Berkeley, CA; you can also order directly if not local to Berkeley.

Mountain Rose Herbs

800-879-3337

www.mountainroseherbs.com

A wonderful online provider of organic bulk herbs and spices.

Organix South

888.989.NEEM (6336)

organixsouth.com

Neem-infused toothpastes, shampoos, and more, available in many natural food stores as well as online.

For Further Training & Education

Ayurveda Lifestyle Wisdom: A Complete Prescription to Optimize Your Health, Prevent Disease, and Live with Vitality and Joy by Acharya Shunya

If you have enjoyed this book and are curious to learn more about the Ayurveda lifestyle topics introduced here, I highly recommend my teacher's book, an in-depth encyclopedia of everything you may wish to know about the science of Ayurveda. It's an excellent reference, guide, and resource for anyone who wishes to take their knowledge of Ayurveda to the next level, appropriate for beginners and advanced practitioners alike.

Take Health Into Your Own Hands Trainings

wholeyoga-ayurveda.com/trainings

Take Health Into Your Own Hands Trainings give you an opportunity to learn research-backed ancient strategies to improve productivity, reduce healthcare costs, and have less sickness and stress-related absenteeism among employees. As a result of this training, 80 percent of students reported improved clarity of mind, 79 percent reported improved ability to cope with stress, 75 percent reported improved ability to be present, 47 percent had fewer aches and pains, and 46 percent slept better.

The training is complete with simple, hands-on health promotion tools, stress-reducing techniques, delicious food samples and recipes, and empowering exercises that bring to life the practices you've read about in this book. This introductory Ayurveda wellness training is highly customizable and can be offered in a variety of formats (including online) that meet your organization's particular needs.

Visit my website to learn more.

Vedika Global

vedikaglobal.org

Visit the unique school where I learned everything you read in this book, for additional opportunities to study with my teachers, colleagues, and myself. If you resonated with the "Freeing Your Spirit" section of this book, I highly recommend the Spiritual Studies Program, a profound spiritual education opportunity with my teacher, Acharya Shunya. This membership-based program illuminates the Vedic spiritual teachings that inform Ayurveda in a way that is accessible for modern needs and lifestyles. Classes are held in Emeryville, California, and online via webinar.

Vedika Global YouTube Channel

www.youtube.com/user/vedikaglobal

Vedika Global's YouTube channel offers you abundant and excellent opportunities to benefit from the living wisdom of Ayurveda, yoga, and Vedanta, as taught by Acharya Shunya's lineage.

Whole Yoga & Ayurveda

wholeyoga-ayurveda.com

Visit and subscribe to my website for updates on classes, events, blog articles, and other opportunities I offer to help you take health into your own hands.

REFERENCES

Ayurvedic Texts

Ashtanga Hrdayam. Translated by K. R. Srikantha Murthy.
Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy, 2004.

Bhavaprakasha of Bhavamisra. Translated by K. R. Srikantha Murthy. Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy, 2011.

Charaka Samhita. Translated by P. V. Sharma. Chaukhamba Orientalia, 2003.

Dash, Vaidya Bhagwan. *Materia Medica of Ayurveda*. Health Harmony, 1991.

Hedge, Dr. Prakash L., and Dr. A. Harini. *A Text Book of Dravyaguna Vijnana*. Chaukhamba Publications, 2011.

Paranjpe, Prakash. *Ayurvedic Home Remedies*. Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan Oriental Publishers & Distributors, 2000.

Sushruta Samhita. Translated by K. R. Srikantha Murthy.
Chaukhamba Orientalia, 2010.

The Bhagavad Gita. Translated by Eknath Easwaran. The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, 1985.

The Upanishads. Translated by Eknath Easwaran. The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, 1987.

Research Studies

CANCERactive

canceractive.com/cancer-active-page-link.aspx?n=1571

A compilation of studies from Tufts University, UCLA, University of Kentucky, Emory School of Medicine, and Memorial Sloan Kettering about how turmeric can prevent and fight cancer.

Journal of Dental Research

jdr.sagepub.com/content/75/2/816.short

Study demonstrates how neem inhibits material properties.

PubMed

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16924272#sthash.x5WD6IAO.dpui

Study on how the conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) in ghee protects against carcinogens, artery plaque, and diabetes, and supports weight loss.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3215354/#sthash.x5WD6IAO.dpui

Study on a group of Indian rural men discovered that men who ate more ghee had lower heart disease incidents than those who ate less.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3039177/

An interesting study on anatomy in ancient India: a focus on the Sushruta Samhita, the oldest surgical textbook.

INDEX

Page numbers in *italic* indicate illustrations and photos; page numbers in **bold** indicate charts and tables.

A

aam, 15
acne, 85– 86
agni, 97
air, 6– 7
ajwain seeds, 54, 54
alcohol, **218**
ama, 15
amalaki, 81
amchur powder, 55
anardana powder, 55, 185
ankle rolls, 155, 156
anorexia, 4, 15, 166
Anti-Acne and Anti-Aging Facemask, 86
anxiety, 113, 122– 123, 163
approval, self-, 144
aphrodisiacs, 198
Arghyam, 168
asanas, 94
Ashtanga Hridayam, 138, 193, 220
astringent taste, 208, 209, **210**
atma bodha, 148
Ayurvedic Fajitas, 64– 65

Ayurvedic Fries, 57
Ayurvedic Pasta, 68– 69, 68
Ayurvedic Veggie Pilaf, 56

B

bananas, incompatibility with, 28
beans, beauty and, 76
beauty
 facemasks and, 85– 88
 food and, 72– 76
 hair care and, 80– 83
 oil pulling and, 186– 187
 overview of, 71
 relaxation and, 89
 soaps, scrubs and, 78– 79
 spices and, 47– 48
 temperature and, 77
beverages, 214
Bhagavad Gita, 97, 121
Bhavaprakash, 21, 188
Bhujangasana, 150, 150
bishop's weed seeds, 54, 54
bitter taste, 208, 208, **210**
blood tissue, 72
body scrub, 78
boiling of water, 20
books, 115, 169
brahmi, 81
breathing exercises, 122– 123, 123, 159

bringraj, 81
butternut squash, 66
butyric acid, 21
buzzing bee breathing exercise, 122– 123, 123

C

Centella asiatica (mandukaparni plant), 117, 117
cereal, 32– 33
Chandogya Upanishad, 15
chanting of mantras, 174– 175
Charaka Samhita, 89
cheese, 23, 25– 26
chewing, 95
chutney, 63
cilantro, 52– 53, 53, 63
Cilantro Chutney, 62, 63
cleanliness, 124
clothing, 226
Cobra Pose, 150, 150
colds, 222– 223
company, quality of, 115
compassion, 5, 125
conception, 218
contemplation, 170
Cooked Opo Squash, 40, 41
cooking, importance of, 18
cooking with love, 30
coriander, 52– 53, 53
Corpus Hippocraticum, 2

cream, 25
cross-training, 213
cumin, 49– 50, 50
curry leaves, 55

D

daily structure, example of, 202– 203
dairy products
 beauty and, 76
 beneficial vs. nonbeneficial, 26
 embracing, 21– 25, 26
 parting with or modifying, 25– 26
dal, 67
dandruff, 81
darkness, 113
dehydration, 20
denial, 113
depression, 113
Dhanvantari, Kashiraj, 1
Dhruvasana, 128, 129
digestion
 as indicator of overall health, 29
 skin and, 80
 timing of meals and, 189
digging deep, 4– 5
dinacharya, 183
dinner, size of, 108
dogs, 158, 169
doshas, 3, 8, 183– 184

Downward-Facing Dog, 158
drinking, 214. *See also* thirst
dry scrubbing, 225

E

early, waking up, 164– 165
earth, 6, 8
eating disorders, 4, 15, 166
elimination, 29
emotions, eating and, 109
environment, eating in pleasant, 111
exercise, 77, 189, 190, 212

F

facemasks, 84– 89, 84
fajitas, 64– 65
fall, 206, **210**
fall season, 219
fenugreek seeds, 54, 54, 81
fermented foods, 73, 74
fire, 6, 7
food
 beauty and, 72– 76
 health and, 15– 16
 timing of eating, 189
fries, 57

fruits, 76, 105

G

Gandhi, Mahatma, 1

gardening, 133

Gayatri Manta, 175

generosity, 130

ghee, 21– 23, 24

ginger, 54, 54

giving, 145

gotu kola (mandukaparni plant), 117, 117

grains, beauty and, 76

gratitude, meals and, 97

green mung dal flour, 78, 193

grounding activities, 196, 200

guilt, 126

gunas, 113

H

hair

heat and, 77

oiling of, 82– 83

washing of, 80– 81

hands, gazing at, 166, 167

Heartwarming Butternut Squash, 66

heat, beauty and, 77

heavy foods, beauty and, 73
hibiscus, 81
higher Self, 137
Himalayan pink rock salt, 51
Hippocrates, 16
home, 161
honey, 28, 105
hrdaya. *See* cilantro; coriander; pomegranate
hunger, 101

|

illness, 222– 223
illumination, 119
incompatible food combinations, 27– 28, 73
Indian food, 46
inner fullness, giving from, 145
insomnia, 114, 196
intake, correct, 101
intention, power of, 127
irritable bowel syndrome, 4, 31

J

jarana, 49– 50, 50
joints, oil massage and, 138
journals, 170
juices, 214

K

kalash, [171](#), [173](#)

kapha dosha

daily structure and, [184](#), [196](#)

moon and, [229](#)

overview of, [3](#), [8](#)

seasons and, [205](#), [207](#), [208](#)

Karma Yoga, [121](#)

khichadi, [31](#), [34](#), [35–36](#)

Khokhani, Amarchand, [161](#)

kitchari, [31](#), [34](#), [35–36](#)

kushmanda, [66](#)

L

Lamott, Anne, [93](#)

lamp, lighting of, [118](#), [119](#)

lassis, [214](#)

leftovers, [32](#), [73](#)

letting go, [129](#), [169](#), [171](#)

libido, [198](#)

like increases like, [9](#)

Lion Pose, [176–177](#), [177](#)

lotus, being like, [146](#), [147](#)

lotus fingers, [156](#), [157](#)

love, cooking with, [30](#)

lunch, [108](#)

M

- macrocosm, microcosm and, 6
- maha aushadhi, 55
- malas, 174– 175, 175
- mandukaparni plants, 117, 117
- mango lassi, 214
- mango powder, 55
- mantras, chanting, 174– 175
- marathon runners, 213
- Marigold Facemask, 87
- marigold flowers, 87– 89
- masks, 84– 89, 84
- Masoor Dal, 67
- masoor dal, 67, 86
- masoor lentils, 225, 225
- massage, oil, 138– 140
- meals, timing of eating, 189
- meat, 27, 76
- medicinal plants, 117
- meditation, 178
- menstruation, 48, 49, 190
- mental state, eating and, 109
- microcosm, macrocosm and, 6
- milk
 - hair and, 82
 - incompatibility with, 27, 28
 - spiced, 37– 39, 38, 105
 - warm, 23
- mind
 - calming of, 122– 123

cultivating, [133](#)
mindful eating, [93](#)– [94](#)
mind quiz, [230](#)
moksha, [16](#)
moon, [229](#)
mornings, transforming, [163](#)
mortar and pestles, [49](#)
mung dal, [42](#)– [43](#), [42](#), [60](#), [61](#)
Mung Dal Pancakes, [60](#), [61](#)
Mung Dal Soup, [42](#), [43](#)
mustard seeds, [54](#), [54](#)

N

napping, [228](#)
natural urges, [194](#)
nature, harmony with, [154](#)
neck rolls, [156](#)
neem powder, [81](#), [185](#), [225](#), [225](#)
numbers, significance of, [175](#)
nutritive tissue, [72](#)
nuts, beauty and, [76](#)
Nyaya, [1](#)

O

oil pulling, [186](#)– [187](#)
oils

beauty and, 73
for hair, 82– 83
massage and, 138– 140
pregnancy and, 75
sleep and, 196
warm, cooked foods and, 18
OM chant, 159
108 (number), significance of, 175
opo squash, 40, 41
orange peels, organic, 81
outside, going, 154
overheating, beauty and, 77

P

pancakes, 60, 61
pancha mahabhutas, 6– 8
paneer cheese, 23
pasta, 68– 69, 68
patience, 148
pearls, 226
pepper, black, 54, 54
personal space, 161
photos, 161
pitta dosha
 daily structure and, 184, 195
 overview of, 3, 8
 seasons and, 205– 208
pomegranate, 55, 185
pragya aparadha, 126

prana, 46, 103
Pranamasana, 152– 153, 153
pregnancy, 75
processed foods, beauty and, 73
productivity, timing of, 195
pungent taste, 208– 209, 209, **210**

Q

quiz, mind, 230

R

raga, 129
raisins, 105
rajas, 103, 113– 114
rajasic foods, 103– 104
rasayana, 117
reading, 115, 169
relationships, 137
relaxation, facemasks and, 89
renunciation, 129
Respectful Greeting Pose, 152– 153, 153
ritha, 81
ritucharya, 206
rock salt, pink Himalayan, 51
rose lassi, 214
runners, 213

S

sadhana, 127
saffron, 86
Sakhi, 158, 169, 176
salt, 51, 73
salty taste, 207– 208, **210**
sanctuaries, personal, 161
sandalwood powder, 85
Sandhya Vandam, 171– 173
sankalpa, 94, 127, 155, 171– 173
sattva, 37, 103, 113, 114, 164
sattvic foods, 103– 104
Savory Sooji, 59, 59
scrubbing, dry, 225
seasons
 beauty and, 77
 beverages and, 214
 dressing for, 226
 ebb and flow of, 11
 exercise and, 212
 fruit and, 105
 new ventures and, 219
 overview of, 205– 206
 sex and, 218
 tastes and, 207– 209, **210**
 weight-loss and, 217
self-approval, 144
service, 120, 145
sex, 77, 198– 199, 218
shame, 126

shampoos, 80– 81
Sharad Purnima, 229
shikakai, 81
showering, 116, 193
Shunya, Acharya, 94, 161
silence, 100, 143
Simhasana, 176– 177, 177
skin, turmeric and, 47– 48, 86
sleep. *See also* insomnia
 oil and, 140
 seasons and, 228
 spiced milk and, 37– 39, 38
 strategies for, 200
 timing of, 201
slow cookers, 36
slowing down, 148
snacking, 72, 105
sneha, 23
soaps, 78
solitude, 142
sooji, 32– 33, 33, 59– 60, 59
Sooji Cereal, 32, 32
soup, mung dal, 42, 43
sour taste, 208, 209, 210
Spiced Milk, 38, 39, 105
spices
 beauty and, 73, 76
 coriander and cilantro, 52– 53, 53
 cumin, 49– 50, 50
 curry leaves, pomegranate, and mango powder, 55

heating: ajwain seeds, ginger, black pepper, mustard seeds, and
fenugreek seeds, 54, 54
Himalayan pink rock salt, 51
overview of, 45
seasons and, 222
turmeric, 47–48, 48
spiritual books, 169
spring season, 205, **210**, 213, 217, 222
squash, 40, 41, 66
sri kanya, 47–48, 48, 85, 185
srota, 18
stability, 130
stress, 114, 122–123, 183, 196
summer season, 205, **210**, 220, 221, 228
sun
cycles of, 10
honoring, 168
sunbathing and, 77
sun meditation, 178
sun salutations, 152
Surya Namaskar, 152
Sushrut, Rishi, 2
Sushruta Samhita (Sushrut), 2, 3
sweet taste, 207, 209, **210**, 222

T

Tagetes erecta (marigold), 87–89
Taj Mahal, 148, 149

Takra, 22, 26, 105
takra, 31
tamas, 25, 103, 113, 129
tamasic foods, 103– 104
tastes, seasons and, 207– 209, **210**
temperature, 77, 188
thirst, 20, 101
 3 (number), 175
Thunderbolt Pose, 98– 99, 99
toothpaste, 185
travel, 77
Tree Pose, 130, 131
triphala herb powder, 81, 225, 225
truth, speaking of, 125
turmeric, 47– 48, 48, 85, 185

U

udgeeth breathing, 159, 200
unity, 6
Upanishads, 169
upastambhas, 15

V

vacations, 221
vata dosha
 daily structure and, 183, 188, 190

- ghee and, 21
- overview of, 3, 8
- seasons and, 205, 208, 209
- vegetables, beauty and, 76
- veggie pilaf, 56
- ventures, new, 219

W

- walking, after meals, 107
- warm foods, 18
- water
 - digestion and, 188
 - as great element, 6, 7
 - seasons and, 214
 - thirst and, 20
- water practice, 171– 173
- weight loss, 217, 225
- winter season, 205, 206, **210**, 218, 219
- wool, 226
- words, power of, 169
- writing, 170

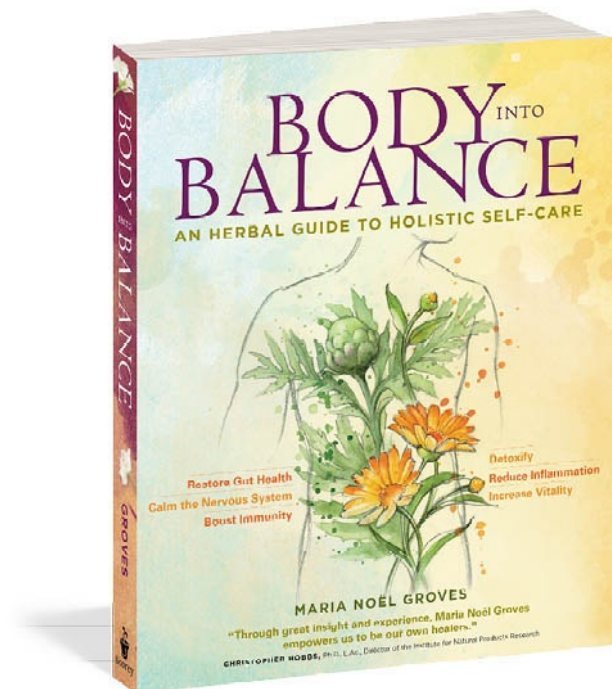
Y

- yoga, 93– 94, 114, 121, 155– 156, 157. *See also specific poses*
- yogurt
 - cold, 25

light spiced, 22, 23, 31



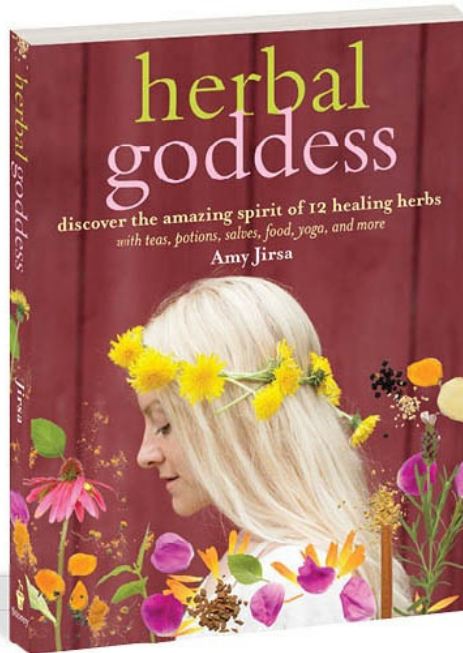
Access the Good Life with More Books from Storey



by Maria Noël Groves

Optimize your health by learning to use herbs effectively. In-depth instructions help you read the clues of your body's imbalances while also teaching you how to minimize your use of pharmaceuticals.

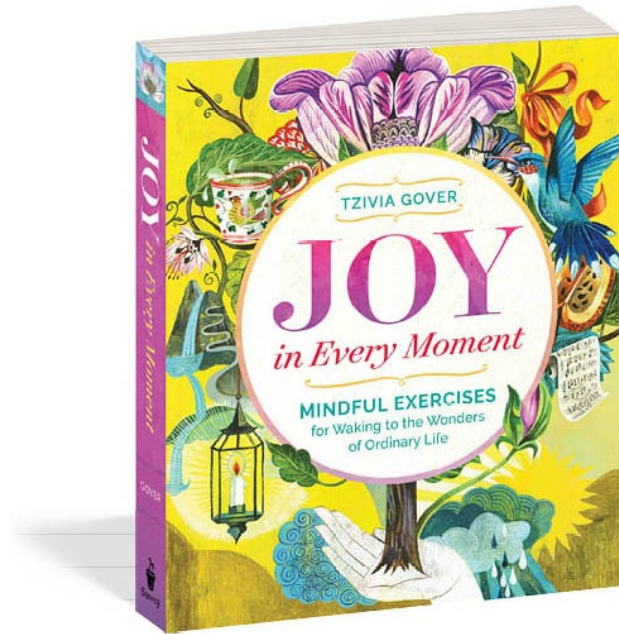
[READ MORE AT STOREY.COM](https://www.storey.com)



by Amy Jirsa

Explore the healing qualities of 12 powerful herbs with recipes for delicious teas and foods and luxurious salves. Complementary yoga poses help you embrace each herb's restorative properties.

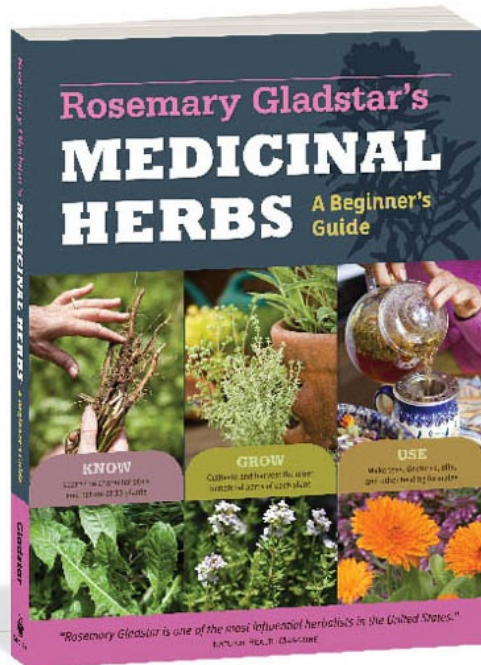
[READ MORE AT STOREY.COM](https://storey.com)



by Tzivia Gover

Short inspirational essays and dozens of simple exercises guide you in bringing mindfulness and gratitude into every aspect of your daily routine whether you're at home, at work, with family, or alone.

[READ MORE AT STOREY.COM](https://www.storey.com)



by Rosemary Gladstar

Enjoy better health using safe, natural, and low-cost herbal preparations. Profiles of 33 common and versatile healing plants show you exactly how to grow, harvest, prepare, and use them.

READ MORE AT [STOREY.COM](https://www.storey.com)

Join the conversation. Share your experience with this book, learn more about Storey Publishing's authors, and read original essays and book excerpts at www.storey.com.

Look for our books wherever quality books are sold or by calling 800-441-5700.



ANANTA RIPA AJMERA is an Ayurveda practitioner and yoga instructor who studied with Acharya Shunya. Ajmera has taught at Stanford University, California Probation Departments, ABC News, and leading business conferences. Her writing is featured on MindBodyGreen, Elephant Journal, and Huffington Post. Visit her website www.wholeyoga-ayurveda.com to learn more.

The mission of Storey Publishing is to serve our customers by publishing practical information that encourages personal independence in harmony with the environment.

Edited by Sarah Guare

Art direction and book design by Michaela Jebb

Text production by Kristy L. MacWilliams

Indexed by Samantha Miller

Cover and interior photography by © Liz Daly, except © Alasdair James/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), [208](https://www.istockphoto.com) (salt); © anilakkus/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), [208](https://www.istockphoto.com) (walnut); © Bonchan/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), [208](https://www.istockphoto.com) (kale); courtesy of Vedika Global, Inc., [231](https://www.istockphoto.com) (Chef Sanjai portrait); © itskatjas/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), endpapers, [12–13](https://www.istockphoto.com), [90–91](https://www.istockphoto.com), [134–135](https://www.istockphoto.com), [180–181](https://www.istockphoto.com); © lpkoe/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), [209](https://www.istockphoto.com) (bananas); © Keith B. Dixon Photography, [231](https://www.istockphoto.com) (Acharya Shunya portrait); © LOVE_LIFE/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), [209](https://www.istockphoto.com) (peppers); Mars Vilaubi, v (background), vi, [24](https://www.istockphoto.com), [87](https://www.istockphoto.com), [89](https://www.istockphoto.com), [106](https://www.istockphoto.com), [141](https://www.istockphoto.com), [175](https://www.istockphoto.com), [197](https://www.istockphoto.com), [209](https://www.istockphoto.com) (lime), [224](https://www.istockphoto.com), [225](https://www.istockphoto.com); © MeePoohyaphoto/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), [117](https://www.istockphoto.com); © Powerofforever/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), [149](https://www.istockphoto.com); © Whyframestudio/ [iStockphoto.com](https://www.istockphoto.com), [165](https://www.istockphoto.com)

Photo styling by Kelly Allen

Illustrations and decorative elements by © magnia/Adobe Stock, v (background) and throughout; © redkoala/Adobe Stock, cover, iii, iv, and throughout; © tanchinella/Adobe Stock, ii and throughout

© 2017 by Ananta Ripa Ajmera

Ebook production by Kristy L. MacWilliams

Ebook version 1.0

February 2, 2017

This publication is intended to provide educational information for the reader on the covered subject. It is not intended to take the place of personalized medical counseling, diagnosis, and treatment from a trained health professional.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages or reproduce illustrations in a review with appropriate credits; nor may any part of this book be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or other — without written permission from the publisher.

The information in this book is true and complete to the best of our knowledge. All recommendations are made without guarantee on the part of the author or Storey Publishing. The author and publisher disclaim any liability in connection with the use of this information.

Storey books are available for special premium and promotional uses and for customized editions. For further information, please call 800-793-9396.

Storey Publishing

210 MASS MoCA Way

North Adams, MA 01247

www.storey.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Ajmera, Ananta Ripa, author.

Title: The ayurveda way : 108 practices from the world's oldest healing system for better sleep, less stress, optimal digestion, and more / by Ananta Ripa Ajmera.

Description: North Adams, MA : Storey Publishing, [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016051466 (print) | LCCN 2016052616 (ebook) | ISBN 9781612128184 (hardcover : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781612128191 (Ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Medicine, Ayurvedic. | Self-care, Health.

Classification: LCC R605 .A568 2017 (print) | LCC R605 (ebook) | DDC 615.5/38—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016051466>

Share Your Experience!

We value your feedback, and so do your fellow readers. Reviews you leave at your ebookstore help more people find and enjoy the books you love. So spread the word, write a review, and share your experience!

EMAIL STOREY

thank you!